A Digit of the Moon



By F. W. BAIN

Translated from the Original Manuscripts

A Digit of the Moon
And Other Love Stories from the Hindu

A Draught of the Blue
together with
An Essence of the Dusk

An Incarnation of the Snow

A Mine of Faults



A DIGIT OF THE MOON

(See page 229)

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and

Other Love Stories from the Hindoo

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F. W. Bain

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A Digit of the Moon

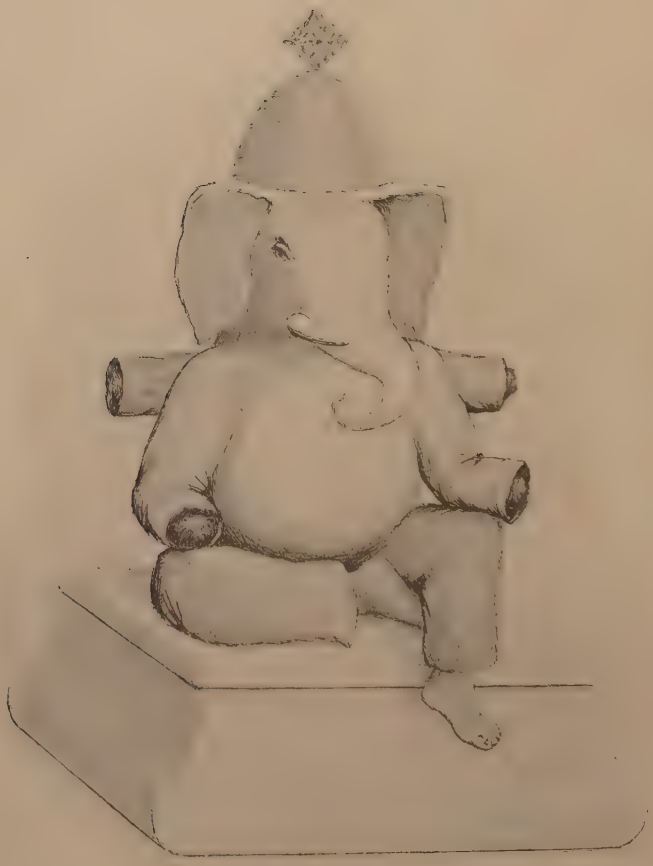
(बालातपरक्ताशशिनी)

A Hindoo Love Story

ममापि च क्षपयतु नीललोहितः
पुनर्भवं परिगतशक्तिरात्मभूः

मथितार्णववीचिविलासिभि
नरवंशप्रिये
गगणाद्वतीर्यसुधानिधि
जगदन्धमधे
विजगन्ति नुमः स्तनमण्डलम्
धृतशक्तिवयम्
प्रलयस्थितिसर्गपयोधरम्
भयनम् शरणम्

To My Wife



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[*For the convenience of the English reader I have added descriptive titles to the sections. The original contains none.*]

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Note.—The Vignette is a rude sketch by the translator from an old bust of Ganésha. He has only one tusk, and should have four arms, but they have been broken. His favourite vehicle is a mouse or rat, and his trunk is always considered to be smeared with vermilion. He is the God of Success, and the Remover of Obstacles, and woe to the man who should neglect to conciliate him, at the opening of any undertaking!

Prefatory Note to Second Edition

THE better to illustrate how, in Hindoo mythology, the ideas of *a beautiful woman, the Moon, and the Sea*, dissolve and disappear into one another, I have placed on the fly-leaf of this edition a single stanza, drawn from another part of my MS., which characteristically exemplifies that *dissolving view;* subjoining here, for the benefit of the uninitiated, a literal translation:

"*O thou lovely Incarnation of the Nectar-dropping Moon, come down from Heaven to lighten our Darkness: Delight of the Race of Man, retaining in thy Womanhood the dancing Play of the Waves of that Sea of Milk out of which thou wert originally churned by the Gods, we the Three Worlds (i. e., of Childhood, Manhood, and Age) do worship the Orb of thy Bosom that possesses for us a Threefold Mystical Feminine Energy*[1]*; being a Pitcher of*

[1] The last lines contain recondite philosophical allusions to the Creation, Preservation, and Destruction of the World, and other matters, in technical terms which defy translation. Life in Hindoo philosophy, as in that of the Middle Ages, carries about with it a perfume of death: there is in its atmosphere something melancholy, and even a little morbid, like the slow tolling of a bell.

Milk for us, when we are Born; a Pillow for us, in the Middle of the Path of Life; and a Shrine, in which we take refuge to die at the last."

But we lose, in a literal prose version, the reverberation, and the echo of the Sea, which undertones the meaning of the words like the accompaniment to a song. This *sound* we might make some attempt to preserve, without doing violence to the *sense*, as follows:

Like a New Moon's exquisite Incarnation,
In the Ebb and Flow of a Surging Sea,
Wave-breasted Beauty, the whole Creation
Wanes, and waxes, and rocks on thee!
For we rise and fall on thy Bosom's Billow
Whose heaving Swell is our Home Divine,
Our Chalice at Dawn, and our hot Noon's Pillow,
Our Evening's Shrine.

WOOLACOMBE BAY, April 29, 1901.

Preface to First Edition

A DIGIT OF THE MOON is the sixteenth part of a much longer work, entitled *The Churning of the Ocean of Time.*[1] A well-known Hindoo legend recounts how the gods and antigods assembled to churn the ocean of milk[2] for the nectar of immortality. After throwing in herbs of various kinds, they churned it with Mount Mandara, and obtained the nectar, with certain other things, one of which was the MOON, who, by the way, is often called "the Lord of Herbs."

But in Sanskrit, the Moon, like the Sun, is a male. Hindoo poets get over this difficulty, when they want a female Moon, by personifying his attributes, or making a part do duty for the whole. Thus, his disc is divided into sixteen parts, called "*streaks*" or "*digits*," and a beautiful woman is "*a digit of the moon.*"

[1] *Sansára-ságara-manthanam.*

[2] For *milk* the author has substituted a technical word which means *the world considered as the scene of never-ending transmigrations.* ("*O world! O life! O time!*") By this he implies that the *nectar* of his work is the residuum of much churning of life and experience of the world, and that it is destined to be immortal.

The whole work, then, called *The Churning of the Ocean of Time*, is, like the Moon, divided into sixteen parts, each named after one of the digits of the Moon. The one now before the reader is called *A Digit of the Moon, turned red by the rays of the dawning Sun.*[1] The point lies in the play on the word *red*, which in the original also means "*enamoured*," "*in love*." That is to say, that the heroine of the story "turns red," *i. e.*, falls in love with the hero, whose name, it will be found, is Súryakánta, or "Sunstone."

I little thought, ten years ago, that it would ever be my lot to play, as it were, the part of Boccaccio, and bring forth meat from the eater, stories from a plague. Yet here also the unexpected came about, in the following way:

Considering how recently Europe has become aware of the very existence of a Sanskrit literature, I had often wondered whether there might not be hidden away, here and there, in the vast ocean of India, literary treasures still

[1] I have never experienced a stranger or more delightful sensation than when, as I was translating this work, I saw this very phenomenon on the Ghauts at Mahábaleshwar: a blood-red Moon going down into the hills at early dawn, with the Sun rising on the opposite peaks. Only the redness which the poet ascribes to the Sun was of course due to the haze of the atmosphere.

undiscovered, which future "churning" might bring up. But I did not expect that my question would ever receive a practical answer. However, a few years ago, when the plague was decimating the city of Poona, carrying off its victims by hundreds a day, personal acquaintance with some of the officers appointed by Government to cope with the enemy put it into my power to do a slight service to an old Marátha Brahman, whose name, by his own particular desire, I suppress. My "service" was indeed a mere trifle, a thing of which no Englishman would have thought twice. Hindoos, however, look on these matters with very different eyes. An Englishman's house may be his castle, but a Hindoo's house is a shrine, a holy of holies, which for unhallowed footsteps to invade is desecration. I was amused to find that my old Brahman regarded me almost as though I had preserved his family from nameless and everlasting infamy. And when he subsequently discovered that I was a humble student of the "polished, sacred" language, and could make shift to admire his beloved Kálidás in the original, his esteem for me rose to a degree almost embarrassing. He came two or three times to see me, and took an obvious pleasure in dilating on the beauties of his ancient authors to one who was at least a good listener. But it struck me as

curious that every time he went away he seemed, as it were, labouring to deliver himself of some important communication, which nevertheless he shrank from discovering to me; and he always eventually departed, with an air of some confusion, and his secret left untold. I thought at the time that he was only nerving himself to make some request of me, of which he doubted the reception, and was unable to screw his courage to the sticking-point. But I was mistaken.

Our interviews came to an abrupt conclusion. The plague stepped in and swept his family clean away, carrying off his wife, all his children, and various others of his kin, leaving him alone untouched—but not for long. One evening, when I came home late, having been out nearly all day, I found on my doorstep a messenger who had been waiting for me, with the inexhaustible patience of an Oriental, for many hours. The plague had remembered my old Brahman at last, and he had sent to ask me to come and see him, "on business of importance." I went off accordingly to a segregation camp, whither he had been removed, and, much to my relief, arrived in time to find him conscious; for he was a fine old gentleman, and when a Brahman is a gentleman, he is a striking type of humanity. He confused me by thanking me, for the hundredth time, for my good

offices, adding, however, that they had been, in a certain sense, wasted, as he was the only one left of his family, and now he also, he was glad to say, was going the same way. He said that he had been anxious to see me before he died, because he had something of value to give me. Hereupon he produced what the uninitiated might have taken for a packet of ladies' long six-button gloves, pressed together between two strips of wood about the size of a cheroot box, and tied round with string; but which from experience I knew to be a manuscript.[1] He handed it to me, observing that it had been in the possession of his family from a time beyond memory, and that nothing would ever have induced him to part with it, had any of that family remained to possess it; but as they were all gone, and as, moreover, it would certainly be burned by the plague authorities as soon as he was dead, it was mine, if I cared to accept it. If not, he said, with an effort to smile, no matter: it could, like a faithful wife, enter the fire on the death of its owner; yet that would be a pity, for it was worth preserving. I accepted his present, and he bade me farewell.

[1] Though I make no attempt to assign a date to this MS., the reader should observe that in India printing has not superseded hand work. The Hindoos have religious prejudices against printed books, and they will not use them in their temples, or for sacred purposes.

I took leave of the old man, not without emotion, for grief and approaching death had converted his face to the very incarnation of misery; and I learned on enquiry that he died about thirty-six hours afterwards, in the early morning.

Notwithstanding the hints let fall by its former owner, I own I was dubious as to the value of my MS., for Hindoos will admire anything in Sanskrit. But when—after having redeemed it with difficulty from the ordeal of fire and the plague authorities by subjecting it to severe fumigations—I fell to examining it,[1] I apologised to the *manes* of my old Brahman for doubting his judgment, and blessed him for his present, which is, I will venture to say, unique in literature. But I will leave the reader to judge of it for himself,[2] warning him only that no language loses so much by translation as the Sanskrit; and advising him, for his own sake, to read it consecutively through, or he will lose much.[3] I cannot refrain from observing, however, that it differs from the general run of classical Sanskrit productions in two very striking particulars—the simplicity of its style,

[1] A well-written MS. in the *Dêwanágari* character is hardly, if at all, inferior to print.

[2] At some future time I hope to translate the remainder, or part of it.

[3] Its principal beauty lies in the skill of its climax, which is lost by neglecting the order.

and the originality of its matter. As to the latter, everybody knows that classical Sanskrit authors have no originality. They do but rhetorically reset and embellish notorious themes: such originality as they exhibit lying, not in their subject, but in its treatment. Our author is an exception. Whoever he was, he must have possessed the gift of imagination: for though the plan of the story was doubtless suggested by the *Wétála-panchawimshatiká*, yet so novel and poetical is the use made of it that it may fairly claim to owe but little to its source, while all the particular stories are curious and original. The book differs, again, in a remarkable manner from other classical products of the Hindoo Muse in the simplicity of its style. The author would seem to have deliberately chosen the epic [1] rather than the classic style as his model. We find here none of that artificiality, that straining and effort at style for its own sake, that perverse elaboration, those insipid, intolerable *shléshas* and interminable compounds which reach a climax in the appalling concatenations of, *e. g.*, the *Kádambarí*. Mature Hindoo literature exhibits precisely the same tendency as its architecture: ornament is piled on

[1] The poem is written in *shlókas*, or *anushtubh*, with occasional deviations (as, *e. g.*, the conclusion) into more elaborate metres.

ornament with aimless, tasteless extravagance, till the whole becomes nauseous, and all unity is smothered and annihilated under a load of rhetorical gewgaws. Just as the rank and luxuriant growth of a creeper will sometimes drain of its juices, dry up, and destroy the tree it was designed to adorn, so the over-development of gaudy rhetorical blossoms and effeminate literary prettinesses has desiccated and broken the spring of the Hindoo mind. The best things in the literature are just those which are simplest, and therefore, as a rule, oldest. Literary arabesque nearly always indicates and springs from the absence of anything to say; a poverty of creative ideas. But our author has really a story to tell, and can therefore afford to exhibit it in naked, unadorned simplicity.

Finally, the words which stand as a motto on the title-page have a history of their own. They are the closing lines of the *Shakuntalá*, and they mean, briefly: *O Shiwa, grant that I may never be born again.* There is a *curiosa felicitas* in their application to the conclusion of the story, where indeed, I found them, scribbled in the margin by another hand; and though it cannot be proved, I am convinced that they were placed there by my old Brahman himself (who had Kálidás by heart), when he took his farewell of the MS., in

an access of grief and despair at feeling his family annihilated and himself deprived of all that had made his life worth living, by the plague. Let us hope that the old man has had his wish, and that "*the purple-tinted god*" has "*destroyed his rebirth.*"

MAHÁBALESHWAR, 1898.

A Digit of the Moon

INTRODUCTION

THE STORY OF THE CREATION OF WOMAN

INVOCATION[1]

May the kindly three-eyed god,[2] who stained his throat deep-purple by the draught of deadly poison which he swallowed for the preservation of the world, preserve you. May the Elephant-faced One[3] sweep away with his trunk all impediments to my thoughts, and may Wáni[4] inspire in my mind for every thought its proper word.

THERE lived formerly, in a certain country, a king, called Súryakánta.[5] And his armies, guided by Valour and Policy, had penetrated in all directions to the shore of the ocean, and his intellect had gone to the further shore of all the sciences, so that one thing only was unknown to

[1] Some such benedictory exordium as this is regarded as indispensable by every Sanskrit author: yet it is remarkable that Kálidás is careless of the rule; *e. g.*, his *Cloud* and his *Seasons* begin at once without any invocation at all.

[2] Shiwa.

[3] Ganésha or Ganapati. See Day One.

[4] Saraswatí, the goddess of speech.

[5] *I. e.*, "sun-beloved"; the name of a fabulous gem, "sunstone" (cp. "moonstone"), said to possess magical properties and exhibit them when acted upon by the rays of the sun.

him, woman, and the love of woman. He was, as it were, the very incarnation of the spirit of misogyny, beautiful exceedingly himself, to scorch with the hot rays of his glory the despairing hearts of all fair women who might chance to cast eyes upon him, yet himself cold as snow to their own melting glances. And as time went on, his ministers became full of concern for the future of the kingdom, for they said: The King has no son, and if he should die, everything will go to ruin for want of an heir. So they took counsel among themselves, and sending for them wherever they could find them, they threw in his way temptations in the form of beautiful women, raining on him, as it were, showers of the quintessence of all the female beauty in the world. But all was of no avail; for no matter what shape it took, the celestial loveliness of those ladies made no more impression on the King's mind than a forest leaf falling on the back of a wild elephant. Then the ministers fell into despair, exclaiming: Truly there is a point at which virtues become vices. It is well for a king to avoid the wiles of women; but out on this woman-hating king! the kingdom will be undone for him. And they took counsel again among themselves, and made representations to the King, exhorting him to marriage. But he would not listen to anything

they could say. So being at their wits' end, they caused it to be bruited about without the King's knowledge, by means of their spies, that they would give a crore [1] of gold pieces to any one who could produce a change in the mind of the King, and inspire him with an inclination for marriage. But though many charlatans presented themselves and performed incantations and other such devices, no one could be found able to effect the desired end. On the contrary, the King's hostility to the other sex increased so much, that he punished every woman who came within the range of his sight by banishing her from the kingdom. And in their fear lest the kingdom should be wholly deprived of its women, the ministers had to place spies about the King, who ran before him wherever he went, and made all the women keep out of his way. And this task was as difficult as standing on the edge of a sword, for all the women in the kingdom were drawn to see him by love and curiosity as if he were a magnet [2] and they so many pieces of iron.

Then one day there came to the capital a certain painter.[3] And he, as soon as he arrived, made

[1] Ten millions.

[2] A kind of play on the King's name: *lóhakánta* means a loadstone.

[3] This method of bringing lovers together is part of a Hindoo story-teller's romantic machinery.

enquiries as to the wonders of that city. Then the people told him: The greatest wonder in our city is our King, Súryakánta himself. For though he is a king, nothing will induce him to have anything to do with women, from the peacock of whose beauty he flies as if he were a snake. And yet he is himself like a second god of love, so that here is the marvel: that one whom the Fish-bannered god [1] has created as a sixth weapon to cleave the hearts of the female sex should have no curiosity to exert his powers. Should the sun refuse to warm, or the wind to blow? But when the painter heard this he laughed, and said: I possess a charm that would act like the sun upon its gem.[2] And one of the spies of the ministers heard him, and went and told them of his arrival and his brag. And they immediately summoned that painter and questioned him, telling him the whole state of the case, and promising him the reward if he could make his words good. And the painter said: Contrive that the King shall send for me, and leave the rest to me.

So the ministers went and told the King: Sire, there has arrived in your capital a painter, whose equal in skill is not to be found in the three

[1] The Hindoo Cupid, who is said to possess five bewildering weapons.

[2] Alluding to the King's name: see n. p. 21.

worlds. And when the King heard it he was delighted, for he was himself skilled in the art of painting and all other arts; and he caused the painter to be brought into his presence. But he, when he came, was amazed at the extraordinary beauty of the King, and he exclaimed: O King, you have caused me to obtain the fruit of my birth in bestowing on me the priceless boon of a sight of your incomparable beauty. And now only one more thing remains. I implore your Majesty to let me make a copy of it, in order that in future I may never be without it. For the sun warms even when reflected in a poor mirror. Then the King said: Show me first specimens of your skill. But beware that you show me no women, otherwise it will be worse for you. So the painter showed him a collection of pictures of all the countries in the world, but among them he had secretly placed the portrait of a woman. And as the King was turning over the pictures, one by one, he suddenly came upon that portrait. But the moment he looked at it, he fell to the ground in a swoon.

Then the painter laughed, and said to the ministers: The cure is effected: pay the physician his fee. But they replied: We must first be sure that the patient is really cured. The painter replied: You will soon find that out. Look to the King,

and restore him, and see what he says when he comes to himself and finds that I am not here. For in the meanwhile I will go out of the room.

Then the ministers summoned attendants, who fanned the King with palm-leaves, and sprinkled him with water scented with sandal. And the King revived, and instantly looking round, exclaimed: The painter, the painter! The ministers said: Sire, he is gone. But when the King heard that, he changed colour, and his voice trembled, and he said: If you have allowed him to escape, I will have you all trampled to death by elephants before the sun goes down. So they went out quickly and found the painter, and fetched him in again before the King. And he fell at the King's feet, saying: May the King forgive me! Alas! my evil fortune must have mixed up that lady's portrait among my other pictures, to bring me to destruction. But the King said: O most admirable of all painters, past, present, or to come, know that you have conferred a benefit upon me by exhibiting that portrait to me, which I could not repay even with my whole kingdom. And beyond doubt, that lady must have been my wife in a previous existence, for emotions such as these point unmistakably to a former life. Now then, tell me, of what land is her father the king? For certain I am, that it is a portrait, for

such beauty as hers could not have been conceived by any mortal brain. None but the Creator himself could have fashioned her. Then the painter smiled, and said: O King, be warned by me. Dismiss this lady from your mind, and think of her no more; otherwise my carelessness may turn out to have been the cause of your ruin. But the King said: Painter, no more! Choose, either to tell me who she is, and be loaded with gold; or not, and I will load you with chains, and imprison you in a loathsome dungeon, with neither food nor water, till you do.

Then the painter said: King, since there is no help for it, and your fate will have it so, learn, that this is the portrait of Anangarágá,[1] the daughter of a brother of the King of the Nágas,[2] who lives by herself in a palace in the forest, two months' journey from here. And what her beauty is, you yourself partly know by personal experience of the effect which even in a picture it produced upon you: yet what picture could be equal to the reality? For every one that sees her instantly falls in love with her, and many

[1] *I. e.*, "the passion, or the rosy-blush, of love." (Pronounce the first two syllables to rhyme with "among," with a north-country "g.")

[2] These Nágas are beings of serpent nature, but often confounded with men: *e. g.*, in *Kathá Saritságara*, I. 6, the nephew of the King of the Nágas is said to be a Brahman. Their women are of inconceivable loveliness.

swoon away, as you did, and there are some who have even died. And yet the Creator, when he made her a casket of beauty so inimitably lovely, placed within it a heart of adamant, so hard that it laughs at all the efforts of the flowery-arrowed god to pierce it. For innumerable suitors have sought her in marriage, coming from all the quarters of the world, and she receives them all with scornful indifference, yet entertains them magnificently for twenty-one days, on this condition, that every day they ask her a riddle.[1] And if any suitor should succeed in asking her something that she cannot answer, then she herself is to be the prize; but if within the stipulated time he fails, then he becomes her slave, to be disposed of how she will. And no one has ever yet succeeded in asking her anything she cannot answer; for she is of superhuman intelligence, and learned in all the sciences; but of the countless suitors who have tried and failed, some she has sent away, and others she retains about her person as slaves, pitilessly showing them every day that beauty which is for ever unattainable to them, so that their lot is infinitely worse than that of

[1] Very few of the stories are really riddles, but they all give the Princess an opportunity of displaying her ready judgment and acumen. It will also be seen that, owing to the device with which the story concludes, there are really only nineteen days, instead of twenty-one.

beasts. And therefore, O King, I warned you, lest the same thing should happen also to you. O be wise, and shun her, before it is too late. For I think that no lot can be more wretched than that of those who are doomed to everlasting regret for having lost what nevertheless they see ever before them, as it were within their reach.

Then King Súryakánta laughed aloud, and he said: Painter, your judgment is not equal to your skill in your own art. For there is a lot infinitely more miserable, and it is that of one who passes his whole life in regret for an object which, with daring and resolution, he might have attained. Let me rather pine for ever miserable in the contemplation of such beauty than weakly abandon my chance of enjoying it. Then the King gave that painter three crores of gold pieces, as the price of the portrait of the Princess, which he took away from him; and, after allowing him to paint his own portrait, dismissed him. And he said to his ministers: Make all ready: for this very night I start in quest of the Princess Anangarágá. Then his ministers deliberated together, and said to each other: Certainly, if the King should fail in his object and never return, the kingdom will be ruined. Yet the same will be the case if he remains here, and scorning the

society of all other women, never has a son. Therefore it is better as it is. For of two evils, the lesser is a good. Moreover, he may possibly succeed.

So that very night, burning with the fierce fire of impatience, the King transferred the burden of his government to the shoulders of his ministers, and set out, with the portrait of his beloved, to win or lose her. And he would have taken nobody with him. But as he was preparing to depart, his boon companion, Rasakósha,[1] said to him: Sire, would you go alone? And the King said, My friend, I may fail, and never return. Why should I drag others with me into the jaws of destruction? I will go by myself. Then Rasakósha said: King, what are you about? You leave yourself behind, if you leave me. That half of you which inhabits your own body is altogether gone upon[2] the Princess, and wholly intent upon her, so as to think of nothing else: then how will you baffle her without that other half of you which lives in me, and is always ready

[1] Pronounce *Russakósh*. The name refers to the part he will play in the story: it means both "a ball of mercury," and "a treasury of taste, wit, literary sentiments or flavours," a sort of walking encyclopædia. The King's companion is a salient figure in Hindoo drama: he is a sort of Sancho Panza, *minus* the vulgarity and the humour.

[2] This colloquialism is an exact facsimile of the Sanskrit expression.

for your service? And what am I to do without my better half? And even if you *do* fail, what will you do without me? for even prosperity without a friend is tasteless [1]: how much more adversity! Then the King said: Well, be it so. Come, let us be off. But Rasakósha said: Did I not say that your mind was wandering? Would you start on such a perilous adventure without first securing the aid of Wináyaka? [2] Who ever succeeded in anything that neglected him? And the King said: It is true. In my eagerness I had almost forgotten him. So he praised Ganésha, saying: Hail, O thou lord of the Elephant Face, whose trunk is uplifted in the dance! Hail to thee, before whom obstacles melt away like the mists of night before the morning sun! Hail to thee, aided by whom even the weak triumph over the strong! Hail to thee, without whom all prudence is vain, and all wisdom, folly! Hail, O thou whose basket ears flap like banners of victory in the wind!

Then they set out on their journey. And they fared on day and night through the forest, as full of wild beasts, apes, and Shabaras [3] as the sea is of jewels: but the King in his preoccupation for

[1] A play upon his own name.
[2] Ganésha, the god of obstacles and success. See Day One.
[3] An old name for Bhíls and other wild tribes.

many days neither spoke nor ate nor drank, living only on air and the portrait of the Princess, which night and day he devoured with his eyes.

Then one day, as they rested at noon beneath the thick shade of a *Kadamba* [1] tree, the King gazed for a long time at the portrait of his mistress. And suddenly he broke silence, and said, Rasakósha, this is a woman. Now, a woman is the one thing about which I know nothing. Tell me, what is the nature of women? Then Rasakósha smiled, and said: King, you should certainly keep this question to ask the Princess; for it is a hard question. A very terrible creature indeed is a woman, and one formed of strange elements. *Apropos*, I will tell you a story: listen.

In the beginning, when Twashtri [2] came to the creation of woman, he found that he had exhausted his materials in the making of man, and that no solid elements were left. In this dilemma, after profound meditation, he did as follows: He took the rotundity of the moon, and the curves of creepers, and the clinging of tendrils, and the trembling of grass, and the slenderness of the reed, and the bloom of flowers, and the lightness

[1] "A tree with orange-coloured fragrant blossoms."

[2] The Hindoo Vulcan, sometimes, as here, used for the Creator, *dhatri* = Plato's *δημιοῦργος*. Sanskrit literature is the key to Plato; much of his philosophy is only the moon-like reflection of Hindoo mythology.

of leaves, and the tapering of the elephant's trunk, and the glances of deer, and the clustering of rows of bees,[1] and the joyous gaiety of sunbeams, and the weeping of clouds, and the fickleness of the winds, and the timidity of the hare, and the vanity of the peacock, and the softness of the parrot's bosom, and the hardness of adamant, and the sweetness of honey, and the cruelty of the tiger, and the warm glow of fire, and the coldness of snow, and the chattering of jays, and the cooing of the *kókila*,[2] and the hypocrisy of the crane, and the fidelity of the *chakrawáka;* and compounding all these together, he made woman, and gave her to man. But after one week, man came to him, and said: Lord, this creature that you have given me makes my life miserable. She chatters incessantly, and teases me beyond endurance, never leaving me alone: and she requires incessant attention, and takes all my time up, and cries about nothing, and is always idle; and so I have come to give her back again, as I cannot live with her. So Twashtri said: Very well: and he took her back. Then after another

[1] Hindoo poets see a resemblance between rows of bees and eye-glances.

[2] The Indian cuckoo. The crane is a by-word for inward villainy and sanctimonious exterior. The *chakrawáka*, or Brahmany drake, is fabled to pass the night sorrowing for the absence of his mate and she for him.

week, man came again to him, and said: Lord, I find that my life is very lonely since I gave you back that creature. I remember how she used to dance and sing to me, and look at me out of the corner of her eye, and play with me, and cling to me; and her laughter was music, and she was beautiful to look at, and soft to touch: so give her back to me again. So Twashtri said: Very well: and gave her back again. Then after only three days, man came back to him again, and said: Lord, I know not how it is; but after all, I have come to the conclusion that she is more of a trouble than a pleasure to me: so please take her back again. But Twashtri said: Out on you! Be off! I will have no more of this. You must manage how you can. Then man said: But I cannot live with her. And Twashtri replied: Neither could you live without her. And he turned his back on man, and went on with his work. Then man said: What is to be done? for I cannot live either with or without her.[1]

And Rasakósha ceased, and looked at the King. But the King remained silent, gazing intently at the portrait of the Princess.

And thus travelling on, day by day, through the forest, at length they drew near to the palace of the Princess Anangarágá.

[1] The very echo of Martial.

DAY ONE

THE STORY OF GANÉSHA AND THE CHÁRWÁKA

THEN, when the towers of the palace rose over the trees, and gleamed like gold on their eyes in the beams of the morning sun, King Súryakánta suddenly exclaimed: Ha! I am undone. And Rasakósha said: How is that? Then the King said: Alas! I have been absolutely possessed by the image of my beloved, night and day, waking and sleeping, so that I have thought of nothing in the world beside. And now here we are at the end of our journey, but at the beginning of difficulties. For as to what I shall ask the Princess, I have not the shadow of an idea. And if the thought of her has such power to bewilder me at a distance, the sight of her will utterly deprive me of my reason, so that I am lost already. Then Rasakósha said: O King, this is exactly why the Princess has hitherto baffled all her lovers. The spell of her beauty robs them of their intellect, and chains up their invention, and thus they fall an easy prey. But fortunate are you, that while your best half has been absent from its body, your other half[1] has been watching over the empty case. Be under no concern: but when we

[1] *I.e.*, Rasakósha himself. The allusion is to a power, possessed by adepts in Yóga, of detaching the soul from the body. See Day Eleven.

are introduced into the presence of the Princess, tell her that you speak by my mouth, and leave all to me. So the King was relieved, and dismissing all other subjects from his mind, he again became wholly immersed in meditating on his mistress.

Then drawing nearer by degrees, at length they entered the precincts of the palace. And there they were met by warders, who enquired who they were. And they went and announced to the Princess that King Súryakánta had arrived as a suitor for her hand. So she sent chamberlains and others, who conducted the King to a pleasure-house of white marble in a garden beautiful with a lake and crystal baths, shady with trees, perfumed with breezes laden with the fragrance of flowers, and musical with the songs of innumerable birds. There they passed the day. But the King, consumed with the fever of his burning desire to see the Princess, had neither eyes nor ears for anything but the portrait.

And when the sun set, King Súryakánta and Rasakósha went to the palace of the Princess, and entered the hall of audience, whose floor, inlaid with slabs of dark-blue crystal, reflected their feet, and whose walls flashed back from the facets of their jewels the light of innumerable lamps. And there they saw Anangarágá, sitting on a

golden throne, clad in a robe of sea-green, and a bodice studded with coral, looking like Lakshmi [1] fresh from ocean. And her eyes were as long as a row of bees, and their lashes jet black with collyrium, and her lips were like freshly painted vermilion, and from her high bosom came the fragrance of sandal. And round her slender waist was a girdle of gold, and on her wrists and ankles gold bangles and anklets, and the soles of her little feet were red with lac, and in her black hair was a gold tiara in the form of a snake, with eyes of rubies, and a tongue of emerald. And in the radiance of her beauty she looked scornfully at the King, and, turning away her head, said, without waiting to be addressed: Propose your question. But the King, struck by the thunderbolt of her stupefying loveliness, sank mute and trembling upon a couch opposite to her, and gazed at her like a bird fascinated by a serpent. Then Rasakósha came forward, and prostrated himself at her feet, and said: Lady, this unworthy mortal is the King's mouth. Is it permitted him to speak? So the Princess said: Proceed. Then Rasakósha rose up, and stood before her, and began:

Lady, there lived formerly, in a certain country,

[1] The goddess of fortune and wealth, who was churned up out of the ocean, and according to some, appeared reclining on an open lotus. Coral is one of the nine gems.

a Chárwáka,[1] who was about to be married. And while he was making preparations for the ceremony, one of his friends came to him, and gave him advice, saying: Propitiate Ganésha, in order that nothing untoward may occur to interfere with your marriage. Then that Chárwáka laughed in derision, and replied: My good Sir, you are a fool. Do I not know that knaves and fools invented the *Wédas*, and instituted the sacrificial rites for their own advantage? All these foolish tales about the gods are merely the dreams of madmen, or the livelihood of rogues. As for this Ganésha that you speak of, what is the use of him? Or how can there be a man with the head of an elephant? And what has he to do with success? He, who forms his plans with prudence, and executes them with wisdom, may count on success. Out on your Ganésha! I will ensure my own success.

So he spoke, but that lord of the Elephant Face heard him, and laughed to himself, gently waving his trunk. And the Chárwáka went on with his preparations. But when all was ready, and the lucky day fixed, then on the morning of that day Ganapati spoke to a certain cow that used to

[1] *I. e.*, an atheist. The opinions of this philosophical school may be found sketched in the *Sarwa-Darshana-Saṅgraha*, § 1.

wander at will about the streets, saying: Cow, go and drop your sacred excrement on that Chárwáka's doorstep. And the cow went and did so. And when the Chárwáka came forth from his house, he put his foot on the cow-dung, and slipped and fell, and broke his leg. So they took him up and carried him in again. And before his leg was cured, his bride died.

Then his friend came to him again, and said: See what comes of neglecting to worship Ganapati. But the Chárwáka answered: Go to; you are an idiot. Who could possibly foresee that a miserable cow would cast its dung on my doorstep? What has Ganapati to do with it? Does he, forsooth! look after and direct the excretions of all the cows in the world? A pleasant idea, to be sure! So saying, he drove his friend away, refusing to listen to him. And when his leg was well, he found another bride, and made preparations for another marriage. And he hired a band of sweepers to go before him and sweep all clean before his feet. But when the day came, Ganapati sent for a crow that ate the daily offerings, and said to him: Crow, there is a Chárwáka going to be married to-day. Now, there is an arch over a certain street, beneath which he will pass; and on it there is an image of myself, of stone, which is very old, and the rain and heat

have loosened and cracked it, so that it is on the point of falling. Do you watch, therefore, and when you see the Chárwáka passing under, then seat yourself upon me, and I will fall. So the crow flew off, and watching his opportunity, seated himself upon the stone image of Ganapati; and it fell on the Chárwáka as he passed below, and broke his arm. So they took him up and carried him back to his house. And before his arm was well, his bride died.

Then his friend came once more to him and said: Is this your wisdom? What did I tell you? Is it not plain now, who it is that is thwarting your efforts? Then the Chárwáka flew into a rage, and said: Enough of your babbling! I will get married in spite of Ganapati. But what can be anticipated in this miserable city, whose cows befoul the streets, and whose buildings are tumble-down. I will provide against any similar accidents happening again. So when he was well, he discovered another bride, and again made preparations for his wedding. And he arranged to go to the bride's house by a circuitous route outside the walls of the city, avoiding the streets altogether. But on the morning of the day, Ganapati went to Indra, and said: Wajradhara,[1] there is a Chár-

[1] "Wielder of the thunderbolt," an epithet of Indra, the god of rain.

wáka going to get married to-day. But he must pass over a certain water-course, which is now dry. Lend me your rain-clouds, for I must teach this infidel a lesson. So Indra sent his clouds, and rained furiously on the hills. And as the Chárwáka was passing over the water-course, the river rose suddenly, and swept down in torrents from the hills and carried him away and drowned him.

And Ganapati saw it and smiled. But on a sudden he wept violently.

Now tell me, Princess, why did the lord of obstacles laugh and weep? And Rasakósha ceased. Then the Princess answered: He laughed when he thought of the folly, blindness, and insolence of that miserable infidel. But suddenly great pity came over him, when he remembered the terrible punishment that awaited that foolish fellow in the future, and all those who like him prepare by their own actions a fearful retribution in other lives and another world: and so he wept.[1]

And when the Princess had said this, she rose up and went out, dismissing the King without looking at him, with a wave of her hand: and the King's heart went with her. But the King and Rasakósha returned to their own apartments.

[1] Perhaps only a Hindoo could appreciate the dexterity with which this story is placed first, and thus the favour of Ganapati, as it were, secured for the rest.

DAY TWO

THE STORY OF THE BRAHMAN'S COWS

THEN the King said to Rasakósha: My friend, although the Princess has answered your question, and you have lost me a day, yet I forgive you, for the sake of the wave of her hand which she made as she went away. Oh! it resembled the bowing of a blossom-laden spray of creeper in a breeze. But if it were not for the portrait, it would be utterly impossible for me to endure the torture of separation from her till to-morrow. And he passed the night in a state of intoxication,[1] drunk with the beauty of the Princess, gazing incessantly at the portrait. And he said: Certainly, this painter was master of his art. This is no picture, but a mirror. There is the very scorn on her lip. And when at last the sun rose, the King rose also, and passed the day with Rasakósha in the garden, onging for the moment of reunion. Then when the sun set, they went again to the hall of audience. And there they saw the Princess, clad in a red robe, with a bodice studded with pearls, and her crown and other ornaments, sitting on her throne. And the King trembled as she looked at him, and he sank upon a couch, speechless and

[1] Just as the clothes of the Princess change colour every day, so does the state of the King's mind, which goes through a regular series of transitory emotions (*wyabhichári*).

fascinated, gazing at her loveliness. Then Rasakósha came forward, and standing before her, began again:

Lady, once upon a time there lived, in the country of a king called Dharmásana,[1] an old Brahman who had three sons. And he possessed nothing in the world but nineteen cows. And when he was about to die, he called his sons around him, and said to them: My sons, I am in the mouth of death, therefore listen attentively to what I am going to say. All that I have to give you is these cows. Divide them amongst you; and let the eldest of you take half of them; and the next, a quarter of them; and the youngest, a fifth part of them. But if there should be any remainder, you must all three of you eat it; if not, all the cows are to be given to the King, and my curse will rest upon you, for disobedience to my last wishes. And having said this, that old Brahman died. And his sons performed his obsequies, and burned him in accordance with the rites.

Then they assembled together for the division of the property. And the eldest brother said: Half of these cows, that is, nine cows and a half, are mine. And the next brother said: One quarter

[1] *I. e.*, "seat of justice." The meaning is important, as the sequel shows. It does the Princess credit that she notes and remembers it.

of these cows, that is, four cows and three-fourths of a cow, belong to me. Then the youngest said: One-fifth of these cows, that is, three cows and four-fifths of a cow, are mine. Then the eldest said: But the sum of all these, added together, amounts only to eighteen cows and a fraction. Thus there will remain over a portion of the last cow. And in that case we must eat it. But how is it possible for Brahmans to eat the flesh of a cow? Or even, how are we to take various portions of any cow, and leave it still alive? [1] But then, what is to be done? For unless we share in our due proportions, all the cows are to go to the King, and our father's curse will fall upon us. And yet what can have been the meaning of our father in placing us in so terrible a dilemma? Thus they disputed among themselves, and the day passed away, but not the difficulty, and night found them still arguing without any solution of the matter.

Now Princess, tell me, how is this to be settled, so as to satisfy equally the father, the three brothers, and the King? And Rasakósha ceased. But the Princess bent down her head, and remained a moment in meditation, while the King's soul almost quitted his body. Then after a while,

[1] To kill, let alone to eat, a cow, would be of course one of the most deadly sins of which a Brahman could be guilty.

raising her head, she replied: Let the brothers borrow another cow. Then of the twenty cows, let the eldest take half, or ten cows; the next, a quarter, or five cows; and the youngest, a fifth, or four cows. Then let them return the borrowed cow. Thus the nineteen cows will be exhausted without leaving a remainder, and the father satisfied: each brother will receive more than under their own division; and finally, the King will be pleased. For he was a just King: and what could displease such a king more than that, in his dominions, Brahmans should kill and eat cows, or disregard their father's orders.[1] Rather would he lose, not nineteen cows, but ten millions.[2]

And when the Princess had said this, she rose up and went out, casting a glance, as she went, at the King, whose heart went with her. But the King and Rasakósha returned to their own apartments.

DAY THREE

THE STORY OF THE BABY RÁJÁ

Then the King said to Rasakósha: My friend, though the Princess has answered your question,

[1] See *Manu*, II., 227, *sqq*.

[2] I remember to have heard a very inferior version of this story from an old Pundit with whom I read Maráthi.

and yet another day has been lost, yet I forgive you, for the sake of the glance she gave me as she went away. Oh! it was cooling to my burning soul as the drops of rain to the parched and thirsty earth. And but for the portrait, it is certain that my life could not last till the morning. Thus the King lamented, and passed the night in a state of longing, gazing at the portrait of his beloved. And when at last the sun rose, he rose also, and passed the day with Rasakósha in the garden, longing for the moment of reunion. And when the sun set, they went again to the hall of audience. And there they saw the Princess, clad in a yellow robe, and a bodice studded with diamonds, and her crown and other ornaments, sitting on her throne. And she looked intently at the King, who sank upon a couch, speechless and fascinated, gazing at her loveliness. Then Rasakósha came forward, and stood before her, and began again:

Lady, in a former age there was a king who died of a fever. And his heir was a baby, too young to speak or walk. Now that king had a brother, who desired the kingdom for himself. And in order to compass this object, he determined to make away with the little Rájá, thinking to himself: There will be no difficulty in this, for he is but a baby, and can easily be put to death in a thousand ways.

So one night he persuaded the child's attendants, by means of an immense bribe, to leave him alone in his room. And he hired an assassin to kill him, posting him in a secret place within the palace, and telling him: At such an hour, enter the king's room, where you will find him alone, and kill him. But this assassin was a Rajpoot from the Deccan, who had but just come to that city, and did not know who the king was. And expecting a man, at the appointed hour he entered the king's room, and saw nothing but a baby playing on the floor with a fruit. And the fruit, escaping from its hands, rolled to the feet of the assassin as he came in. And the little Rájá put out his hand, and cried, *Bhó*, *Bhó*. So the assassin rolled it back, and the baby laughed and clapped its hands. Thus they remained, playing with the fruit, till the guards came in and found that assassin. And when they asked him who he was, he said: I have a message from my master to the king. Then they laughed, and said: The king is dead: there is the king. But he was amazed, and said: Then I must return and tell the news to my master. For how can I deliver a message to one who cannot even speak? And they suffered him to depart, and he went out, and fearing for his own life, left that city without delay.

Then the king's brother, finding that his plot had failed, hired a whole band of robbers. And watching his opportunity, he posted them by the side of a road leading to a temple, and said: There will come by this road a baby, magnificently dressed, and ornamented with jewels, attended by servants. Fall on them and plunder them, and, if you please, kill them, but make sure that you kill the baby. But while they waited, in the meanwhile some other robbers, attracted by the richness of the little Rájá's ornaments, set upon his retinue. And killing all his servants but one, who fled naked, they stripped the little Rájá of all he had on him, but left him alone alive, saying, He cannot tell any one, let him live. So they hastily departed. Then that fugitive crept back, and finding the baby in the road, picked it up, and wrapping it in a cloth, carried it home. And he passed before the eyes of the gang that was waiting to kill the baby Rájá, but they thought that he was some beggar, and took no notice of him. And thus a second time the child escaped.

Then the king's brother bribed a cook, who put deadly poison into the little Rájá's milk. And it was given to him in a crystal goblet. And he took it in both hands, and put it to his mouth, to drink; and at that instant, one of the attendants standing before him sneezed. And the little Rájá

dropped the goblet, and began to crow and clap his hands in delight; but the goblet fell to the ground and broke into a thousand pieces, and all its contents were spilled upon the floor. Thus he escaped the third time. And before the king's brother could form another plot, he was himself slain by the husband of a woman of the Kshatriya caste, whom he had carried off and dishonoured.

Now tell me, Princess, how was it that the schemes of that villain could never succeed against the little king, being but a mere child? And Rasakósha ceased. Then the Princess said: It was its very childhood that baffled him. For just as a stone, lying openly on the ground, is more secure than a costly jewel, though protected by adamantine bars, because it is worthless and arouses no cupidity; so is a thing so feeble that none would attack it more powerfully protected by its very feebleness than strength possessed of many enemies though defended by a thousand guards. No antidote so good as the absence of poison; no virtue so good as the absence of beauty; no fortification so good as the absence of enemies; and no guard so potent as the helplessness of a child. For where are the enemies of the fragile lotus?

And when the Princess had said this, she rose up and went out, looking back as she went at the

King, whose heart went with her. But the King and Rasakósha returned to their own apartments.

DAY FOUR

THE STORY OF BIMBA AND PRATIBIMBA

Then the King said to Rasakósha: My friend, your question was again answered by the Princess, and of my days now three are gone, yet freely do I forgive you, for the sake of the glance she gave me as she went away. Oh! it snared my soul as it were in a net. And but for the portrait to keep me alive during the period of separation, beyond question I should never see the light of day. So he passed the night in a state of lovelorn recollection,[1] an enemy to sleep, gazing at the portrait. And when the sun rose, he rose also, and got somehow or other through the day, by the help of Rasakósha and the garden. Then when the sun set, they went again to the hall of audience. And there they saw the Princess, clad in a sable robe and a bodice studded with sapphires, and her crown and other ornaments, sitting on her throne. And she looked kindly at the King, who sank trembling upon a couch, speechless and fascinated, under the spell of her beauty. Then Rasa-

[1] *Smara* means both love and memory.

kósha came forward, and standing before her, began again:

Lady, there lived formerly in a certain country two brothers, Brahmans, called Bimba and Pratibimba,[1] who were twins. And I think that the Creator, when he made one, had gone under water to make the other. For the moon does not more closely resemble her own image in a lake, nor one leaf on a branch another, than each of them did the other. Between them, when they were children, the sole point of distinction was the charm tied for that purpose round their necks; and when they grew up, those who saw them together imagined that their own eyes had become enemies, and were each giving a separate reflection of the self-same object. And as their external forms, so were their voices, and their internal dispositions: they corresponded in every atom, from the surface of the skin to the inmost recesses of the heart.

Now one day it happened that Bimba saw a young woman[2] at the spring festival. And she looked at him at the same moment. And then and there the god of love penetrated their hearts, employing their mutual glances as his weapon. So having discovered her family and place of

[1] Both words mean *image, reflection.*

[2] The *hetæra* plays in old Hindoo stories a still larger part than she did in the Greek.

residence, Bimba used to go and visit her three days in every week. But in the excess of his own happiness, proud of the extraordinary beauty of his love, he could not contain himself, nor endure to keep the secret of his own good fortune. So he told his brother the whole story; and contriving a suitable opportunity, he exhibited to him his mistress, who was all unconscious of what he was doing. But Pratibimba, being as he was but the double of his brother, instantly conceived an equally violent passion for her. And without scruple—for what has love to do with honour?—he used to go himself, on the other three days of the week, to visit her. But she in the meanwhile, believing him to be Bimba himself, for she could not see any difference, only rejoiced in gaining as she thought the company of her lover twice as often as before.

But when some time had passed by, it fell out that Bimba, not being able to endure separation, went to visit his mistress on one of his brother's days. And when he got there, he saw Pratibimba, who had arrived before him, and was lying asleep on a couch while his beloved fanned him with a palm leaf. But she, when she saw Bimba come in, uttered a shriek of astonishment and terror, which woke Pratibimba. And while she looked in amazement from one to the other, Bimba rushed

upon Pratibimba, mad with jealously and howling with rage, while Pratibimba did the same to him. And grappling with one another, they rolled upon the floor, fighting and kicking each other, till, hearing the shrieks of the woman, the King's officers came in and separated them, and carried them all three to the judge. Then Bimba said: This man is my brother, and he has stolen my beloved from me. But Pratibimba said: No, she is mine: it is you that are the thief. Then Bimba howled: I was first, and you are a villain. And Pratibimba echoed his words.[1] So the judge said to the woman: Which of them is your lover? But she answered: Sir, I cannot tell which is which, nor did I ever know that there were two till to-day.

So now tell me, Princess, how shall the judge distinguish between them? And Rasakósha ceased. Then the Princess said: Let him take all three apart, and ask each to describe in detail the circumstances under which he saw the woman first. For though the impostor may have heard that it was at the spring festival, yet the eye that saw, aided by the heart that remembers, will convict the ear that only heard.

And when she had said this, the Princess rose up and went out, smiling at the King over her

[1] There is an untranslatable play on the word here.

shoulder, and she drew away the King's heart after her. But the King and Rasakósha returned to their own apartments.

DAY FIVE

THE STORY OF SUWARNASHÍLÁ

THEN the King said to Rasakósha: My friend, though my mistress guessed your question, and now four days have gone, yet I forgive you, for the sake of the smile she gave me when she went away. Oh! it irradiated the gloom of my soul as the moonlight illuminates the forest glades: and when she disappeared, darkness again prevailed. But for the portrait, I were a dead man before morning. And he passed the night in a state of impatience, gazing at the portrait. Then when the sun rose, he rose also, and passed the day by the help of Rasakósha and the garden And when the sun set, they went again to the hall of audience. And there they saw the Princess, clad in a pale red[1] robe, and a bodice studded with emeralds and her crown and ornaments, sitting on her throne. And she dropped her eyes when she saw the King, who sank with a beating heart upon a couch, speechless and fascinated, under the spell of her

[1] *Goura* cannot mean white, because *dhawala* comes on a later day.

beauty. Then Rasakósha came forward and stood before her, and began again:

Lady, in former times there was a king, who made war upon a neighbouring king, and went out and fought a great battle with him. Now there was in his army a certain Kshatriya, who, fighting all day long in that battle, after slaying multitudes of the enemy with his single arm, at length grew tired and faint from exhaustion. And perceiving this, many of the enemy set upon him at once, and overpowered him, and, after mangling him with innumerable wounds, left him for dead upon the ground. But when the moon rose, that Kshatriya recovered his senses, and, as it were, came back to life. And he dragged himself with difficulty as far as a neighbouring village. And then his strength failed, and sinking down exhausted at the door of a certain house, he struck one great blow upon it, and fell down senseless.

Now there lived in that house a Brahman woman, whose husband was away from home. And she was beautiful as a jasmine blossom, and pure as snow, and her name was Suwarnashílá.[1] And hearing the knock, in the dead of night, she was frightened; but she looked out of a small round window, and saw in the bright moonlight a man lying still at her door. Then she thought:

[1] See note 2, p. 58.

This may be a snare. Alas! the neighbours praise me for my beauty, and to whom is not beauty an object of cupidity? Or how can beauty, like a great pearl, be safe when its guardian is away? Then she looked again, and saw a dark stream trickling from the body along the white ground. And her heart was filled with compassion, and she thought: Doubtless the man is wounded, and perhaps dying. The greater [1] sin would be, to leave him to die at my door. So she summoned her maid, and went out, and took in the wounded man, and dressed his wounds and nursed him, keeping him in her house till he was well.

Then that Kshatriya, seeing her daily, was burned to a cinder by the glory of her beauty, and he made evil proposals to her. But she stopped her ears, and would not listen to him, but said: What! would you repay benefits with treachery and ingratitude? Know, that to a virtuous woman her husband is a god. Depart, and let me alone. Then finding that he could not prevail upon her, the Kshatriya said to her: It is you, not your husband, that is the divinity. Your beauty would turn even a holy ascetic from his penance. And though I owe you my life, yet you have robbed me of it again. And now I must

[1] *I. e.*, to take him in, with her husband away, would be bad enough, but, etc. A Hindoo, even at the present day, would murder his wife for a much smaller crime than this.

depart quickly, otherwise my passion will master me, for love is stronger than gratitude. Then he went away hurriedly, but with reluctance, somewhere else.

But when the husband returned, a certain barber's wife, who was jealous of Suwarnashílá for her beauty, met him and said: Happy are those who possess treasures. In your absence another man has been wearing your crest-jewel. So the husband, burning with jealousy, went home and asked his wife. And she said: It is true, but listen; and she told him the whole story. But he would not believe her. Then she extended her hand to the fire, and said: I appeal to the fire, if I have ever been faithless to you for a moment, even in a dream. And the fire shot up, and a bright flame licked the roof, and two tongues of flame crept out and kissed that saint, one on the mouth, and the other on the heart. But blinded with jealousy and rage, the husband said: This is a trick. And taking his sword, he said to his wife: Follow me. So she said: As my lord pleases. Then he led her away into the forest, and there he tied her to a tree, and cut off her hands and her feet, and her nose and her breasts, and went away and left her. And after a while she died alone in the forest, of cold and pain and loss of blood.

But that Kshatriya heard of what he had done. And filled with rage and despair, he went to that husband, and said to him: O fool, know, that you have murdered a saint. And but that I know that life will henceforth be a punishment to you worse than any death, I would slay you where you stand. But as it is, live, and may your guilt bring you death without a son. Then the husband, learning the truth, and discovering the villainy of that lying barber's wife, was filled with remorse. And he abandoned the world, and went to the Ganges to expiate his guilt. But the Kshatriya killed himself with his own sword.

So now tell me, Princess, why does fate inflict such terrible punishment on the innocent? [1] And Rasakósha ceased. Then the Princess said: Can emancipation be attained, save by those who are worthy of it? And how can gold [2] be tested, save by fire? And Suwarnashílá stood the test, and proved her nature: and doubtless she has her reward. For even death is not so sure as the consequences of even the minutest action.

Then a bodiless voice [3] fell from the sky, and

[1] This appalling question, which has puzzled the wise men of all ages, is answered by the Princess as well as by any one else.

[2] An allusion to the name Suwarnashílá, which means "good as gold."

[3] This is an every-day phenomenon in Hindoo stories; and its appearance in the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius puts it beyond all doubt that his story came originally from India.

said aloud: Well spoken, dear child. And the Princess rose up and went out, looking at the King with glistening eyes, and the heart of the King went with her. But the King and Rasakósha returned to their own apartments.

DAY SIX

THE STORY OF THE THREE QUEENS

Then the King said to Rasakósha; My friend, though your question was again answered by the Princess, and now five days are lost, yet fully do I forgive you, for the sake of the tear that glistened in her eye as she went away. O! it was like a drop of dew in the blown flower of a blue lotus. It is beyond a doubt that but for the portrait my life would fail before the morning. And he passed the night in a state of stupefaction, gazing at the portrait of his mistress Then when the sun rose, he rose also, and got through the long hours of day with difficulty by the help of Rasakósha and the garden. And when at length the sun set, they went again to the hall of audience. And there they saw the Princess, clad in a blood-red robe and a bodice studded with opals, and her crown and other ornaments, sitting on her throne. And she was looking for the King when he came in, and the King sank upon a couch, speechless and

fascinated, under the spell of her beauty. Then Rasakósha came forward and stood before her, and began again:

Lady, there was once a king who had three queens, of such indescribable beauty, that at night in the light fortnight it was impossible to decide which of the four was the true moon. And one night, when the king was sleeping in the hot season on the terrace of his palace in the company of his queens, he woke up while they were asleep. And rising up, he stood in the moonlight looking down upon his sleeping queens. And he said to himself: Various indeed is the form assumed by the beauty of woman. But I wonder which of my queens is the most beautiful of the three. So he went from one to the other, considering them attentively. And one queen lay on her back in the full light of the moon, with one arm over her head, and one breast raised, and every now and then a light breeze stirred and lifted her garment, disclosing it. And another lay in the shadow of the trellis-work with alternate stripes of shadow and light turning her into curves of ebony and ivory. And the third lay all in deep shadow, save that a single streak of moonlight fell softly on the shell of her little ear. So the king wandered all night from one to another, puzzling over his difficulty, thinking each queen to be the most beautiful till he

came to another. And before he had decided it, the sun rose.

Then when, after performing his daily ceremonies, he was going to take his seat on his throne, his prime minister, named Nayanétri,[1] said to him: O king, why are your royal eyes red with want of sleep? So the king said: Nayanétri, last night it came into my head to ask myself, which of my three queens was the most beautiful. And I could not sleep for my perplexity, and even now I have not been able to solve the problem. Then Nayanétri said: O king, be content that you have queens between whom there is no distinction in beauty, and no cause of jealousy. Idle curiosity destroys peace of mind and produces evil. But the king said: I am determined, at whatever cost, to settle this point.

So finding that the king's heart was set upon the matter, Nayanétri said to him: King, ministers are like riders: a horse which they cannot restrain they must at any rate guide, or it will be the worse for both. Since it is absolutely necessary for you to decide between your queens in respect of beauty, listen to me. There has recently arrived in your capital a dissolute young Brahman called Kántígraha,[2] who is famous in the three worlds as a

[1] A master of policy.

[2] Meaning both "a *connoisseur*," and "a devourer of beauty," with an allusion to Ráhu, who causes eclipses by devouring the moon.

judge of female beauty. Send for him, and let him see your queens, and he will certainly tell you which is the most beautiful. For a swan cannot more accurately separate milk from water,[1] than he can distinguish the shades of beauty.

Accordingly the king, much pleased, had Kántígraha fetched; and as they stood conversing, he caused his three queens to pass in order through the room. And when the first queen passed, the Brahman stood as if rooted to the ground. And when the second passed, he trembled slightly. And when the third passed, he changed colour. Then when all had gone, the king said: Brahman, tell me, for you are a judge, which of those three is the most beautiful? But Kántígraha said to himself: If I tell the king, I may displease him, by slighting his favourite: moreover, the other two queens will certainly hear of it, and have me poisoned. So he bowed, and said: King, I must have time to decide: give me leave till to-morrow. So the king dismissed him. And Kántígraha went quickly away, intending to quit that city before nightfall, yet with reluctance, for he said to himself: There is one of those queens I would give much to enjoy.

But Nayanétri, who could read the heart from

[1] A fabled power of swans, frequently alluded to in Sanskrit poetry.

the external signs, said to the king: King, this Brahman means to give you the slip, for he is afraid, and will probably endeavour to leave the city before night. But I can tell you what to do, so as to discover his opinion. So the king did as his minister told him. And discovering which of his queens was the most beautiful, he loved her the best, so that the other two, being jealous, poisoned her. And the king, discovering it, put them to death. Thus through curiosity he lost all his queens, as Nayanétri predicted.

So now tell me, Princess, what did the king do to discover the opinion of Kántígraha? And Rasakósha ceased. Then the Princess said: He need not have done anything: the third queen was the most beautiful. For the first queen's beauty astounded that Brahman; that of the second struck him with awe: but that of the third touched his heart. However, Nayanétri wished to make sure. And so, knowing the character of Kántígraha, he caused the king to send him false letters, one from each queen, feigning love and appointing a meeting, but all for the same hour. And he, being only one, would go to that queen whom he judged most beautiful, and be caught by the guards set to watch by the king. For the actions of men are a surer indication of their hearts than their words.

And when the Princess had spoken, she rose up and went out, with a look of regret at the King, whose heart went with her. But the King and Rasakósha returned to their own apartments.

DAY SEVEN

THE STORY OF THE FALSE ASCETIC AND THE KING'S DAUGHTER

Then the King said to Rasakósha: My friend, though the Princess has again baffled you, and now six days are lost, yet I forgive you, for the sake of the opportunity that your story gave my beloved of exhibiting her wonderful intelligence. Oh! she has the soul of Brihaspati in a woman's body. But my heart was racked by the regret in her glance as she went away. And even with the portrait, I cannot understand how I shall endure the period of separation. So he passed the night in a state of restlessness, gazing at the portrait. And when the sun rose, he rose also, and managed to get through the day, aided by Rasakósha and the garden. Then when the sun set, they went again to the hall of audience. And there they saw the Princess, clad in a robe of azure and a bodice studded with crystal, and her crown and other ornaments, sitting on her throne. And she sighed when she saw the King, who sank

upon a couch, speechless and fascinated, under the spell of her beauty. Then Rasakósha came forward and stood before her, and began again:

Lady,[1] there was in former times a rogue, who had lost his all by gambling with other rogues like himself, and who became an ascetic in order to make a living by seeming piety. So he smeared his body with ashes, and matted his hair into a knot, and put on a yellow rag and a necklace of bones, and a rosary, and went about hither and thither in the world practising hypocritical asceticism when anybody was looking at him, and begging. And one day, when he was sitting by the roadside, the daughter of the king of that country passed by on her elephant. And the wind blew aside the curtain of her *howdah*, and revealed her to his eyes. And she struck him with the fever of fierce desire, so that he uttered an ejaculation, and exclaimed: The fruit of my birth certainly lies in obtaining possession of that beauty. But how is it to be done?

So after meditating profoundly on the matter for a long time, he went to a large tree just outside the king's palace, and hung himself up like a bat,[2]

[1] Should any reader be of opinion that I ought to have omitted or emasculated this story, I can only reply that I wish all Bowdlerisers no worse fate than that of the ascetic in the text.

[2] History repeats itself. M. Rousselet, who travelled in

head downwards, from a branch. And thus he remained for hours, muttering to himself. And this he continued to do every day, so that the people came in crowds to see him. And news was carried to the king that a great ascetic had come, and was practising penance in a tree in front of his palace. So the king, much pleased, and thinking himself fortunate, went to examine him, and the ascetic blessed him, upside down, from the tree. Then the king was delighted, and sent food and other offerings to the rogue.

Then one day it happened that the king's daughter, whose name was Hasamúrtí,[1] came by on her elephant, and saw the ascetic hanging like a bat in the tree. And the sight tickled her, and she laughed aloud; and the ascetic heard her. So getting down from the tree, he went to the king. And having effected an entrance, he said to him: King, your daughter laughs at me, thus disturbing my devotions in the tree. Now in former times many great sages, irritated by scorn or neglect, have cursed the offenders, and inflicted terrible punishments on them. But I am long-suffering, and will spare your daughter. Nevertheless, I am about to curse your kingdom,

India in the sixties, mentions, in his *L'Inde des Rajas*, a case that he saw in Rájputána of a holy man who suspended himself in a tree "like a ham."

[1] *I. e.*, "laughter incarnate."

so that no rain will fall on it for twenty years. Now the king was a great simpleton. And when he heard this, he was dreadfully alarmed; and he prayed so earnestly to the ascetic that the rogue, pretending to be mollified, said: Well, for this time I will abandon my design of cursing your kingdom. Only beware that it does not occur again. Then he went back to his tree, and the king scolded his daughter in private.

But the very next day the king's daughter passed again by the tree. And seeing the ascetic hanging, in spite of her promises to her father, her former hilarity returned upon her mind, and she laughed louder and longer than before. So the ascetic went again to the king, who, pale with terror, managed with difficulty and the most abject apologies once more to appease his wrath. And he returned to his tree, and the king again scolded his daughter, who promised never to offend again.

Then for two days Hasamúrtí went and came by another road, to avoid the opportunity of giving offence to the ascetic. But on the third day she forgot, and once more came past the tree, and saw him hanging. And suddenly, as if inspired by Shiwa himself,[1] she burst into a peal of laughter,

[1] *Attahása*, "loud laughter," is a name of Shiwa. Kálidás (in his *Cloud*, v. 62) compares the snowy peaks of Mount

and she continued to laugh as if she was mad even after she had entered the palace.

So the ascetic got down from the tree, and went to the king. And he said: O king, certainly your kingdom is doomed, and your daughter is possessed by an evil spirit. For she has laughed at me again, even worse than before, and cancelled years of my reward, by disturbing my meditations. Now, therefore, prepare to suffer the extremities of my vengeance. Then the king, at his wits' end, said: Holy man, is there absolutely no remedy? The ascetic replied: Am I ever to be disturbed in my devotions? There is none; your daughter is clearly incurable. But the king said: Can nothing be done to cure her? Do you know no potent spell to conquer her malady? Then that rogue, inwardly delighted, said: Well, I will do this, out of mercy. I will see your daughter, and perform incantations over her. And if I can drive out the evil spirit of unseasonable laughter that possesses her, it is well: but if not, nothing remains but the curse.

So the king carried him to his daughter's apartments, and said to his daughter: My daughter, your laughter incessantly disturbs this holy man at his devotions. And now he has come, out of

Kailas to the laughter of Shiwa "rolled into a ball." (Note that laughter is always *white* in Sanskrit poetry.)

mercy, to exorcise the laughing demon that possesses you: otherwise, my kingdom, cursed by him, will perish for want of rain. Then the ascetic said: Let all others depart, and leave me in private with the king's daughter. But the king said aside to the ascetic: Sir, my daughter must not be left alone with any man. Then the ascetic replied: Fear nothing on my account: I am not a man: it is many years since I sacrificed my manhood [1] to the Dweller in the Windhya hills.

But Hasamúrtí heard him, and she said to herself: My father is a fool, and doubtless this man has some design against my honour. He shall find I can do more than laugh. So she said to her father: Have no fear: this is a holy man. But she secretly stationed all her maids in readiness in the next room. Then when the ascetic found himself alone with the king's daughter, his evil passion rose to such a pitch that he could scarcely contain himself. Nevertheless he drew a circle, with trembling hands, and placing the king's daughter in it, he muttered awhile, and then said: My daughter, you must have the quarters of heaven for your only garments,[2] or the spell will

[1] *Spado factus sum.* The "dweller" is Párwatí, or Durgá, Shiwa's other half, in the strict sense of the term.

[2] *Digambara, i. e.*, you must be stark-naked, or in a state of nature.

not work. Remove your clothes. But Hasamúrtí said: Reverend Sir, it is impossible. Then he caught hold of her. But she clapped her hands, and her maids ran in and seized him. And she said: Examine this ascetic, and see whether he is a man or not. So they did so, and said, laughing: Madam, he is very much a man indeed. Then Hasamúrtí said: Take this knife, and deprive him of his manhood. And they did as she commanded them.

Then Hasamúrtí said to him: Now go, for the incantation is finished. And, if you please, complain to the king, my father: I have the evidence to convict you. So the maids released that ascetic. But he, as soon as they let him go, began to laugh, and continued to laugh till he reached the king. And he said: O king, do not hinder me: we have successfully performed the incantation, and see, I have caught the laughing demon, and am carrying him away. And he went away laughing, with death in his heart.

So now tell me, Princess, why did that ascetic laugh? And Rasakósha ceased. Then the Princess, frowning slightly, replied: He laughed, in the cowardice of his soul, with exultation at having escaped from those maids as from the mouth of death; counting the failure of his scheme and the loss of his manhood as nothing, in comparison with

the preservation of bare life. For cowards count the loss of life as the greatest of evils; but the great-souled esteem it as the least, and would forfeit it a thousand times, rather than fail in the object at which they aim.

And when she had said this, the Princess looked significantly at the King, and rose up and went out, and the King's heart went with her. But the King and Rasakósha returned to their own apartments.

DAY EIGHT

THE STORY OF THE PILGRIM AND THE GANGES

Then the King said to Rasakósha: My friend, though my beloved has answered your question, and now seven of my days are gone, yet I forgive you, not only for the sake of her frown—oh! it played on her face like a dark ripple over the surface of a lake—but still more for the sake of her words. For surely she meant to encourage me in my suit. Oh! she is a paragon of wisdom, and yet it is just her wisdom that makes her inaccessible. Even the portrait scarcely suffices to keep my soul alive during the long hours of separation. Thus he passed the night in a state of trepidation, gazing at the portrait. And when the sun rose, he rose also, and got somehow or other through the day by the help of Rasakósha

and the garden. Then when the sun set, they went again to the hall of audience. And there they saw the Princess, clad in a saffron robe and a bodice studded with carbuncles, and her crown and ornaments, sitting on her throne. And she smiled at the King as he came in, and he sank upon a couch, speechless and fascinated, under the spell of her beauty. Then Rasakósha came forward and stood before her, and began again:

Lady, there lived formerly in a certain country a very stupid Brahman householder, who inadvertently committed a deadly sin. And his spiritual adviser told him, that his guilt could be cleansed and his sin atoned for, only by going and spending the remainder of his life bathing in the Ganges. So he handed over his goods to his son, and set out, with his pot and staff, on his pilgrimage to the Ganges. And after travelling for some days, he came to the bank of a small mountain streamlet, whose waters in the hot season were all but dry. And he said to himself: Doubtless this is the sacred Ganges. So he took up his abode on the banks of that stream, bathing every day in such water as he could find. And thus he remained for five years.

Then one day there passed by that way a Páshupata[1] ascetic. And he said to the Brahman: My

[1] A particular follower of Shiwa.

son, what are you doing here? So he replied: Reverend Sir, I am performing penance, for the expiation of sin, on the banks of the Ganges. Then the ascetic said: What has this miserable puddle to do with the Ganges? And the Brahman said: Is this, then, not the Ganges? And the ascetic laughed in his face, and said: Truly, old as I am, I did not think that there had been folly like this in the world. Wretched man, who has deluded you? The Ganges is hundreds of miles away, and resembles this contemptible brook no more than Mount Méru resembles an ant-hill.

Then the Brahman said: Reverend Sir, I am much obliged to you. And taking his pot and staff, he went forward, till at length he came to a broad river. And he rejoiced greatly, saying: This must be the sacred Ganges! So he settled on its bank, and remained there for five years, bathing every day in its waters. Then one day there came by a Kápálika,[1] who said to him: Why do you remain here, wasting precious time over a river of no account or sanctity, instead of going to the Ganges? But the Brahman was amazed, and said: And is this, then, not the Ganges? Then the Kápálika replied: This the Ganges! Is a jackal a lion, or a Chándála [2] a Brahman? Sir, you are dreaming.

[1] Another sect of Shiwa worshippers.

[2] The lowest of all the castes, a synonym for all that is vile and impure, like the "Jew dog" of the Middle Ages.

Then the Brahman said sorrowfully: Worthy Kápálika, I am indebted to you. Fortunate was our meeting. And taking his pot and staff, he went forward, till at length he came to the Nermada. And thinking: Here, at last, is the sacred Ganges, he was overjoyed; and he remained on its banks for five years, bathing every day in its waters. But one day he observed on the bank near him, a pilgrim like himself, casting flowers into the river, and calling it by its name. So he went up to him and said: Sir, what is the name of this river? And the pilgrim answered: Is it possible that you do not know the holy Nermada? Then the Brahman sighed deeply. And he said: Sir, I am enlightened by you. And he took his pot and staff, and went forward.

But he was now very old and feeble. And long penance had weakened his frame and exhausted his energies. And as he toiled on in the heat of the day over the burning earth, the sun beat on his head like the thunderbolt of Indra, and struck him with fever. Still he gathered himself together and struggled on, growing weaker and weaker day by day, till at last he could go no further, but fell down and lay dying on the ground. But collecting all his remaining strength, with a last desperate effort he dragged himself up a low hill in front of him. And lo! there before him rolled the

mighty stream of the Ganges, with countless numbers of pilgrims doing penance on its banks and bathing in its stream. And in his agony he cried aloud: O Mother Ganges! alas! alas! I have pursued you all my life, and now I die here helpless in sight of you. So his heart broke, and he never reached its shore.

But when he got to the other world, Yama said to Chitragupta [1]: What is there down against him? And Chitragupta said: I find against him a terrible sin. But that he has expiated by fifteen years' penance on the banks of the Ganges. Then that Brahman was amazed, and said: Lord, you are mistaken. I never reached the Ganges. And Yama smiled.

Now tell me, Princess, what did Yama mean by his smile? And Rasakósha ceased. Then the Princess said: Yama is just, and cannot err; and Chitragupta cannot be deceived. But what is this whole world but illusion! And just as penance performed in an improper spirit, even on the actual banks of the Ganges, would be no true penance, so that poor simple Brahman's penance, performed in the belief that he had reached the Ganges, was counted by that holy One as truly so performed. For men judge by the fallacious

[1] Yama (pronounce Yum) is the judge of the dead, and Chitragupta his recorder, who keeps account of every man's actions.

testimony of the senses, but the gods judge by the heart.

And when the Princess had said this, she rose up and went out, smiling at the King, whose heart went with her. But the King and Rasakósha returned to their own apartments.

DAY NINE

THE STORY OF THE REPENTANT WIFE

Then the King said to Rasakósha: My friend, the Princess is again victorious, and now eight days are lost, yet I cannot but forgive you, for the sake of the smile she gave me when she went away. Oh! it gleamed on my soul like the dazzling whiteness of a royal swan illuminated by the sun on the Mánasa lake. Alas! even the portrait will scarce enable me to live till morning. And the King passed the night in a state of bewilderment, gazing sorrowfully at the portrait. Then when the sun rose, he rose also, and got through the long day by the help of Rasakósha and the garden. And when the sun set, they went again to the hall of audience. And there they saw the Princess, clad in a purple robe, with a bodice of burnished gold, and her crown and ornaments, sitting on her throne. And she looked at the King with joy, and the King sank

upon a couch, speechless and fascinated, under the spell of her beauty. Then Rasakósha came forward and stood before her, and began again:

Lady, in a certain city there was a wealthy merchant, who possessed a very beautiful wife; and he loved her more than his own soul. But she was of light conduct, and walked in a path independent of her husband,[1] and looked after other men, and her virtue under temptation was like a blade of grass in a forest conflagration. And though out of his great love for her, that merchant forgave her all her faults, she only despised him for it, and disliked him the more.

And one day, she looked out of her window, and saw in the street a handsome young Rajpoot. And, smitten with passion, she instantly left her husband and her home, and ran away with him. But when he found that she had gone, that merchant, her husband, in his despair almost abandoned the body. But the hope that she would one day return kept him alive: hope alone binds to the world those whom separation has made miserable. Nevertheless, from the day she departed, all other things became abominable in his eyes. And neglecting his business, he sank into poverty, and became an object of contempt and derision

[1] An independent woman is a synonym for a harlot, in Sanskrit.

to his friends. And forsaking all occupation or pleasure, he remained alone in his empty house, with the image of his runaway wife in his heart, night and day. And thus he lived for three years, every hour of which seemed to him as long as a *kalpa*, in the black darkness of desolation.

But she, in the meanwhile, after living with that Rajpoot for some time, grew tired of him, and left him for another paramour, and him again for another, flitting from one to another like a bee from flower to flower. And it happened that one night, when she was living with a certain merchant's son he, in the new ardour of his admiration for her beauty, suddenly stooped down to kiss her feet. But not being aware of his intention, she drew her foot abruptly away, and it caught on the jewel of a ring in his ear, and was torn. And even though it was cured, the scar remained.

And one day, when three years had gone by, her husband, the merchant, was sitting by himself in his deserted house, gazing with the eye of his heart [1] at the image of his wife, when there came a knock at the door. And as his servants had all long ago left him, for he had no money to give them, he went to open it himself. And when he did so, he looked, and there before him was his wife. She was worn, and old, and the flower of

[1] *Smara* means "love" and also "memory."

her beauty was gone, and she was clothed in rags and dusty with travel, and she looked at her husband with eyes dim with tears and shame and fear, as she leaned against the doorpost, faint from hunger and thirst and fatigue. But when he saw her, his heart stopped, and his hair stood on end, and he uttered an exclamation of wonder and joy. And taking her in his arms, he carried her in, and put her on the bed which she had abandoned and disgraced; and fetching food and water, with feet that stumbled from the ecstasy of his joy, he washed the dust off her, and dispelled her anxiety and fear, and revived her heart, and uttered no reproaches, but blessed her for her return, with laughter and tears; and it was as though she had never been away, even in a dream. And as he was gently cherishing her, and shampooing her all over to soothe her fatigue, his eye fell on the scar that had remained on her foot from the wound caused by the merchant's son. And putting his finger on it, he said to her with a smile of compassion: Poor wounded foot, it has found a resting-place at last. But she looked at him silently, with large eyes, and suddenly she laughed, and then and there her heart broke and she died. And he, when he found that she was dead, fell down on the floor at her feet, and followed her.

So now, tell me, Princess, why did that woman's heart break? And Rasakósha ceased. Then the Princess said: It broke with grief. For when she saw that her husband repaid her evil conduct with kindness, and remembered the occasion that had caused the wound upon her foot, repentance came suddenly and flowed into her, like a river too great for her heart to hold it, and it split and broke, and she died.

And when she had spoken, the Princess rose up and went out slowly, looking regretfully at the King, whose heart went with her. But the King and Rasakósha returned to their own apartments.

DAY TEN

THE STORY OF THE WRESTLER'S PET

Then the King said to Rasakósha: My friend, now nine days are gone, and I begin to fear: and certainly, I never will forgive you if I lose my darling. For she looks at me now, not as she used to look, but kindly, as if she also felt the pang of separation. Now, therefore, devise some cunning question that she cannot answer, while I endeavour by means of the portrait to keep my soul from parting from my body till to-morrow. So the King passed the night in a state of doubtful perplexity, gazing at the portrait. And when the

sun rose, he rose also, and got somehow through the day, aided by Rasakósha and the garden. And when the sun set, they went again to the hall of audience. And there they saw the Princess, clad in a robe of dazzling white, and a bodice studded with amethysts, and her crown and other ornaments, sitting on her throne. And she looked at the King and drew a long breath, and the King sank upon a couch, speechless and fascinated, under the spell of her beauty. Then Rasakósha came forward and stood before her, and began again:

Lady,[1] there lived formerly in a certain village, a tawny-haired wrestler, who kept in his house a pet. And one day he returned home and found that it had gone out. So he ran out into the street to look for it. And seeing a man sitting at the corner of the street, he asked him: Have you seen my pet? The man said: Had it a string tied round its neck? The wrestler said: Yes. Then the man said: It went this way. So the wrestler went on, and enquired again. And one said: I saw it standing on two legs, endeavouring to climb that wall. Then another said: And I saw it on all fours crawling along by the wall. And a third

[1] The point of this crafty little story almost evaporates in translation. It is artfully contrived to entrap the Princess into saying "an ape," but she is too cunning. Tawny-haired means, literally, "ape-coloured."

said: And I saw it, on three legs, scratching its head with the fourth. So going still further, he met a washerman, who told him: It came this way and made faces at its own face in the water. And going still further, he met a fruit seller, who said: I saw it sitting under that tree, pulling out the feathers of a bleeding crow,[1] and I gave it a handful of monkey nuts.

Then going on, he met two men conversing together, and he asked them. And one said: I saw it with another of its own species searching for fleas in its hair. And the other said: What was the colour of the hair? [2] The wrestler answered: The same as mine. So the other replied: It is over yonder in the tree, swinging on a branch.

So now tell me, Princess, what kind of creature was that wrestler's pet? And Rasakósha ceased. Then the Princess smiled and said: It was no ape, but a child; perhaps his own son.

And when she had said this, she rose up and went out, as if with difficulty, looking reproachfully at the King, whose heart went with her. But the King and Rasakósha returned to their own apartments.

[1] The pun is untranslatable: it may mean also, "tossing up its gory locks" (*kákapaksha*).

[2] This is the critical point. These words may also mean: What is the caste of the child? The wrestler's answer fits both. The searching for fleas, as applied to the child, will surprise no one who has been in India.

DAY ELEVEN

THE STORY OF THE DOMESTIC CHAPLAIN

Then the King said to Rasakósha: My friend, though the Princess is still unconquered, and ten of my days are gone, yet I would have forgiven you, had you not made this day's story so short. For no sooner had it begun than it ended; and now not only is my delight cut short, but, like a thirsty man who has drunk insufficiently, I have not had enough to last me till I see my beloved again. At least endeavour to lengthen your stories, otherwise I am wholly undone. For now must I endure another night of separation, by the feeble aid of the portrait, which loses its power daily by contrast with the original. Thus the King spent the night in a state of fearfulness, gazing at the portrait. And when the sun rose, he rose also, and hardly got through the day with the assistance of Rasakósha and the garden. Then when the sun set, they went again to the hall of audience. And there they saw the Princess, clad in a robe of emerald hue, and a bodice studded with moonstones, and her crown and other ornaments, sitting on her throne. And she looked at the King affectionately, and he sank upon a couch, speechless and fascinated, under the spell of her beauty.

Then Rasakósha came forward and stood before her and began again:

Lady, there lived formerly, in a certain country, a king. And he had a domestic chaplain, who was smitten with an evil passion for another man's wife. And she was a wicked woman and returned his love. But owing to the watchful jealousy of her husband, they could find no opportunity for private interviews. So at last, finding himself unable to visit his beloved in his own person, that chaplain adopted the following scheme. He feigned great friendship for her husband, and paid him many attentions. And being an adept in Yóga, he cultivated his good-will by exhibitions of his superhuman power. And one day he said to him: I know by my art how to enter other people's bodies, and I can cause you to do the same, if you have any curiosity about it. Then that foolish husband, not perceiving his intention, eagerly consented.

So the chaplain took him away one night to the cemetery, and there by means of spells and magic power he caused both of them to abandon the body. But no sooner had the husband quitted his body than the chaplain entered it himself, And without losing a moment, he hurried away, rejoicing in the success of his stratagem, to the house of his beloved in the form of her husband.

But the husband, finding himself deprived of his own body, exclaimed: Alas! I am undone. But having no other resource he was obliged against his will to enter the body of the chaplain, which lay empty near him. And he returned homewards slowly from the cemetery, full of grief. But as chance would have it, his mind being wholly occupied with other reflections, his feet led him, as it were of their own accord, to the house of the chaplain, whose body he was occupying.

In the meantime, his wife, consumed by the fever of desire, and unable any longer to endure separation, seized the opportunity afforded by her husband's absence, and went like an *abhisárikâ*,[1] to the house of her Brahman lover. And so it happened, that when the chaplain arrived at her house, she was not there. So he remained there, cursing his fate, and devoured by impatience, all night long. But she on her part arrived at his house, just before her husband, in the form of the chaplain, came there also. And when he went in, he was astonished to see his own wife. But she, not recognising who he was, but imagining him to be her lover, ran towards him and threw her arms round his neck, exclaiming: At last I have you. And that foolish husband

[1] A term, very common in Sanskrit poetry, for *a woman who goes of her own accord to her lover.*

was so delighted, for for a long time his wife had treated him coldly, that he forgot everything in the joy of the moment, and remained with her all night, enjoying the company of his own wife.

Then in the morning she rose up early while he was still asleep, and went secretly back to her own house. And the chaplain, on his part, wearied out with waiting, and in a very bad humour, left her house before she arrived, and returned home. And when he got there, he saw, to his astonishment, the husband in his body, lying asleep on his bed. So he woke him and said angrily: What are you doing in my bed? Then the husband replied: What do you mean by running away with my body? The chaplain said: Enough of this! I have suffered the tortures of hell in your abominable body, and I have a good mind to burn it. So the husband trembled for fear, and said humbly: I had no body but yours to enter, and I was cold; give me back mine, and take your own as soon as possible. So the chaplain carried him away to the cemetery, and by his magic power caused them to quit their bodies, and each re-entered his own.

But no sooner had the husband got back into his own body than he woke as it were from a dream, and remembered all: and he exclaimed: Rogue of a Brahman, it was you my wife em-

braced. But the chaplain replied: What have I had to do with your wife? But mad with rage, the husband laid hold of him, and dragged him to the king's officers. And he fetched his wife, and told the judge the whole story, and said: Punish these wicked persons: for they have robbed me of my honour. Then the chaplain said: I have not touched your wife. And she said: Of what are you complaining? Was it not yourself that I embraced? [1] But the judge was puzzled, and did not know what to say.

Now, Princess, decide for him. And Rasakósha ceased. Then the Princess said: The chaplain was a rogue, and intended wickedness, yet he was not amenable to the pains of law; for though he had planned, he had not executed, his scheme. And the woman, though she had done wrong, yet did it under the eye and sanction of her own husband, who acquiesced in and approved of her act. But that husband, whose passions were so little under control that he could aid and abet his wife in soiling his own honour, well knowing what he was about, deserves nothing but contempt and derision as the author of his own misfortune. Therefore let all three be dismissed unpunished.

And when the Princess had spoken, she rose up

[1] It is not clear how she knew this, unless she heard him tell the judge.

and went out, reluctantly, and the King's heart went with her. But the King and Rasakósha returned to their own apartments.

DAY TWELVE

THE STORY OF THE ELEPHANT AND THE ANT

Then the King said to Rasakósha: My friend, though I hear but little of your stories, for the beauty of my beloved holds me spellbound and stops my ears, yet methinks her intelligence must be more than human, for as yet even you have not succeeded in posing it. And now eleven of my days are gone, and only ten remain. Never will I forgive you if I lose her. For day by day her looks grow kinder, and the moment of separation more appalling, and the efficacy of the portrait less potent to soothe me in her absence, so that it is doubtful whether I can live till to-morrow. And the King passed the night in a state of sickness, gazing at the portrait. And when the sun rose, he rose also, and passed the day with difficulty, aided by Rasakósha and the garden. Then when the sun set, they went again to the hall of audience. And there they saw the Princess, clad in a robe of rose-colour, and a bodice studded with ox-eyes,[1]

[1] It is not clear what *goméda* means.

and her crown and other ornaments, sitting on her throne. And she leaned eagerly forward to see the King come in, and he sank upon a couch, speechless and fascinated, under the spell of her beauty. Then Rasakósha came forward and stood before her, and began again:

Lady, there was once a lordly elephant, the leader of a forest herd. And he rushed through the forest, like a thunderbolt of Indra, and the rain of ichor poured down from his mighty temples in streams, as he broke down the bushes and young trees in his charge. And then, having sported to his heart's content, he marched slowly through the glades like a mountain, with his herd behind him. And coming to an ant-hill, he drove his tusks into it, and cast up the earth. And then going onward, he stood at rest in a little pool, and drenched his sides with clear water collected in his trunk; and running his tusks into a bank, he stood leaning against a lord of the forest,[1] swaying gently to and fro, with his eyes shut, and his basket-ears cocked, and his trunk hanging down. And the ivory of his tusks showed against his great dark-blue body like a double row of white swans against a thunder-cloud.

But meanwhile, the ants were thrown into confusion by his destruction of their hill, which killed

[1] *I. e.*, a tall tree. Our idiom is the same.

many thousands of them. And they said: What! are we to die for the wanton sport of this rogue of an elephant? So they determined to send a deputation to the elephant, to demand reparation. And they chose seven of the wisest among them. So the ambassadors went and crawled in a row up the bole of the great tree against which the king of the elephants was leaning, till they reached the level of his ear. Then they delivered their message, saying: O king of the elephants, the ants have sent us to demand reparation from you for causing the death of great numbers of their caste. If not, there is no resource but war. But when the elephant heard this, he looked sideways out of the corner of his eye, and saw the row of ants upon the trunk of the tree. And he said to himself: This is a pleasant thing. What can these contemptible little ants do to us elephants? And taking water in his trunk, he discharged it with a blast against them, and destroyed them.

But when the ants saw the destruction of their ambassadors, they were enraged. And waiting till night, they crept out of the ground in innumerable myriads while the elephants were asleep, and gnawed the skin of their toes and the soles of their feet, old and young.[1] Then when

[1] The author probably knew that the elephant's feet are very apt to go wrong and cause trouble: but whether "white

in the morning the elephants began to move, they found their feet so sore as to be almost useless. So trumpeting with rage and pain, they rushed about the forest, destroying the ant-hills. But they could not reach the ants, who crept into the earth, while the more they ran about, the worse grew their feet. So finding all their efforts useless, they desisted: and fearing for the future, they resolved to conclude peace with the ants. But not being able to find any, they sent a mouse, who went underground, and carried their message to the ants. But the ants replied: We will make no peace with the elephants, unless they deliver up their king to be punished for slaying our ambassadors. So the mouse went back to the elephants, and told them. And seeing that there was no help for it, they submitted.

Then the king of the elephants came alone into the forest, with drooping ears, to deliver himself up to the ants. And the ants said to the Shami [1] creeper: Bind this evil-doer, or we will gnaw your roots and destroy you. So the creeper threw its arms round the elephant, and bound him so tightly that he could not stir. And then the ants crawled out in myriads and buried him in earth,

ants" or any other ants could produce the disease is a point for the natural historian to determine.

[1] Famous in poetry for its extraordinary toughness.

till he resembled a mountain. And the worms devoured his flesh, and nothing but his bones and his tusks remained. So the ants remained unmolested in the forest, and the elephants chose another king.

So now tell me, Princess, what is the moral [1] of this story? And Rasakósha ceased. Then the Princess pondered awhile and said: Even united, the weak are not always stronger than the strong. For an elephant is still an elephant, and an ant but an ant. But the strength of the strong is to be estimated by their weakness.[2] For if the elephants had known this, and protected their feet, they might have laughed at all that the ants could do to them, and even a single elephant would have been more than a match for all the ants in the world.

And when the Princess had said this, she rose up and went out slowly, looking sorrowfully at the King, whose heart went with her. But the King and Rasakósha returned to their own apartments.

[1] Literally, what is the error of policy (*nítídósha*) in the story?

[2] *I. e.*, "a chain is no stronger than its weakest link." The Princess's answer is exceedingly clever: and there are few who would not have given the obvious answer which she rejects.

DAY THIRTEEN

THE STORY OF THE MIRAGE HUNTER

Then the King said to Rasakósha: My friend, unless I am blinded by love and egoism, the Princess exhibits signs of a disposition to favour me. But alas! now twelve of my days are gone, and only nine remain. Oh, beware! lest you lose me my beloved. And even the portrait now brings me no relief, for day by day it grows less like her. It looks at me with scorn, but she with tenderness. Even with it, I know not how I shall endure separation till the morning. So the King spent the night in a state of lassitude, gazing at the portrait. And when the sun rose, he rose also, and passed the long hours of day with the help of Rasakósha and the garden. Then when the sun set, they went again to the hall of audience. And there they saw the Princess, clad in an orange-tawny robe, and a bodice studded with rubies, and her crown and other ornaments, sitting on her throne. And a shadow fled as it were from her face when she saw the King, and he sank upon a couch, speechless and fascinated, under the spell of her beauty. Then Rasakósha came forward and stood before her, and began again:

Lady, once upon a time, the master of a caravan was crossing the great desert. And as he went

along, he suddenly looked up, and saw before him in the distance the walls of a great city, with a beautiful lake of heavenly blue before it. And he was amazed; and with a soul on fire with longing for the nectar of that lake and that city, he urged on his camels in that direction. But he could not reach it; and suddenly it disappeared, and he found himself alone in the desert, with the sun and the sand, and no water and no city. Then he said: This is a wonderful thing. I would not lose that city for all my wealth. Then his followers said to him: Sir, this is a delusion: it is the mirage: there is no such city and no water. But he would not believe them. And remaining where he was in the desert, he waited till next day. And at the same hour he saw it again. So he mounted his swiftest camel, and pursued it for hours far into the desert, but he could not overtake it: and as before, it disappeared.

Then he abandoned his journey and encamped in the desert. And day after day he gave chase to that beautful city with its water, but never got any nearer to it. But the more he pursued it, the more his yearning to reach it grew upon him, so that at last he forgot everything else in the world.

And meanwhile his affairs went to ruin through neglect. And hearing of his proceedings his relations came to him in the desert, and said: What is

this that you are doing? What madness has smitten you? Do you not know that this is the mirage, and that you are wasting your time in pursuing phantoms while your wealth goes to ruin? But he answered: What are words in comparison with the testimony of the eyes? Do I not see the city and its water as I see you yourselves? Then how can it be a delusion? Then his relations flew into a rage, and said: You fool, it is the mirage. But he said: If it is nothing, then how can I see it? Explain this to me. But they could not. So they abused him and laughed at him, and went away, leaving him alone in the desert. And he remained there, spending his all in purchasing camels, and every day pursuing that city till it disappeared. And this he continued to do, till his wealth was exhausted, and his camels died, and he himself was lost, and he died in the desert, and the sun whitened his bones.

Then his story went abroad, and the people said: What difficulty is there in this? The sun of the desert made him mad. But his relations said: Out on this madman! he has destroyed us with his folly. And a certain ascetic heard the story: and he laughed to himself, and said: *Trashy trishy washy wishy.*[1] Says the pot to the pipkin: Out on you, miserable clay!

[1] I have slightly modified the original jingle, which means: The thirst for delusion is the bane of the universe.

Now tell me, Princess, what did that ascetic mean? And Rasakósha ceased. Then the Princess said: His relations blamed the madness of that caravan-leader, in that he took mirage for reality, not knowing that they were themselves no less mad, in taking this world and its perishable wealth for reality, and pursuing, as he did, phantoms. For what is this world but illusion? Thus they resembled pots of clay abusing clay pipkins for being made of clay.

And when the Princess had spoken she rose up and went out slowly, looking at the King sadly, and the King's heart went with her. But the King and Rasakósha returned to their own apartments.

DAY FOURTEEN

THE STORY OF THE RED LIPS

Then the King said to Rasakósha: My friend, this day also is lost, and now but eight days remain behind. And each day the moment of separation becomes more terrible, and the period of absence more insupportable; while the virtue of the portrait wanes, like the moon, threatening to leave my soul in total darkness. And yet what is a single night of separation to the whole of my life, if I lose her? So the King passed the night in

a state of anxiety, gazing at the portrait. Then when the sun rose, he rose also, and managed to get through the day with the help of Rasakósha and the garden. And when the sun set, they went again to the hall of audience. And there they saw the Princess, clad in a robe of cloth of silver, and a bodice studded with beryls, and her crown and other ornaments, sitting on her throne. And her bosom heaved when she saw the King, who sank upon a couch, speechless and fascinated, under the spell of her beauty. Then Rasakósha came forward and stood before her, and began again:

Lady, there was in former times a king, who collected rarities from all quarters, purchasing them at no matter what price; and his palace was the resort of merchants of every land, who flowed into it like the rivers into the sea. And one day there came a merchant,who said to him: O king, I bring you a thing which has not its peer for rarity or beauty in the three worlds. And I procured it for you, knowing your generosity, at the risk of my life. Then he took from a chest a cup, made of the tusk of an elephant, white as snow, but round its rim ran a blood-red ring. And he said: This is the cup out of which Bimboshthá,[1] the daughter of the King of Lanka,[2] a Rákshasi

[1] *I. e.*, "red lipped."

[2] Ceylon: reputed to be the home of a certain kind of demons called Rakshasa.

famous in the three worlds for her incomparable beauty, drank every day. So exquisitely is she formed that it seems as if the separate perfections of all other women have been collected together to make her members. But the apex and crest-jewel of all her charms is her mouth. The very soul of vermilion is pale compared with her lips; redder than blood themselves, they banish all blood from the faces of all who behold them, pallid with passion at the sight of them. And whatever she touches with them bears ever afterwards the stain, like the stain of fruit: and as you see, the edge of this cup has been turned by the touch of her lips to a colour which nothing in creation can parallel. And I bribed her doorkeeper to steal it for an immense sum of money, and came away, fearing for my life; and now it is a present to your Majesty. Then the king, overjoyed by the singularity and extraordinary beauty of that cup, ordered his treasurer to pay to the merchant ten times the amount he had given the doorkeeper, and dismissed him.

But it happened that the king's son was present at their conversation, and heard what the merchant said. And an overpowering passion instantly came upon him for that lady of the ruddy lips. And thinking of nothing else, he went to bed at night, and fell asleep, and dreamed a

dream. He thought that he mounted a horse, and rode without ceasing at full gallop, till he came to the shore of the sea. And there dismounting in haste, he entered a ship, and set sail for Lanka. And the ship carried him swiftly over the sea, and on arriving, he leaped out, and ran quickly through the streets, till he came to the palace of the daughter of the Rakshas. And as he reached it, that instant the sun set on one side of the sky, and the moon rose, like another sun, in the opposite quarter, and lit up with his [1] radiance all the front of the palace. And he looked, and lo! there on the terrace he saw before him that daughter of the Rakshas, illuminated by the amorous moon, whom she rivalled in beauty; and on the yellow disc of her face her two lips shone like two leaves of fire. And the king's son, unable to bear the lustre of their beauty, fell down in a swoon. But in his swoon he saw before him those lips without intermission, and they swelled up till they became like two huge mountains, and then, breaking into innumerable pairs which filled the sky like the stars, they crowded in upon him, and he felt them gently kissing him all over. And on a sudden, he saw the palace again before him, and he entered it, and saw the daughter of the Rakshas

[1] The moon is not feminine in Sanskrit.

at the end of a long hall, and he ran up to her and sank down at her feet. But she, bending over him, approached her lips to his cheek. And as they came nearer and nearer, they suddenly became a pair of hideous jaws, with lips thin and green as a blade of grass, and a double row of teeth white as ivory and sharp as saws, and a black pit between. And as they loomed larger and larger upon him out of the darkness, he uttered a loud shriek—and awoke.

So now tell me, Princess, why did that king's son shriek? And Rasakósha ceased. Then the Princess said with a smile: He was afraid of being bitten.

And when she had spoken, she rose up and went out, looking with longing eyes at the King, whose heart went with her. But the King and Rasakósha returned to their own apartments.

DAY FIFTEEN

THE STORY OF THE LOTUS AND THE BEE

Then the King said to Rasakósha: My friend, that merchant was a liar; for no lips in the world could match the beauty of those of my beloved. Alas! that the sweetness of her smile should be the means of conveying such bitterness to my

soul, as she answers your questions with unerring dexterity, and so annihilates my hopes each day. And now but seven days remain, and the thought of losing her is like poison in the draught of nectar which I drink daily from her beauty. Even the portrait is becoming hateful to me, for it mocks me with its scorn, and assuredly my life will be extinct before the morning. So the King passed the night in a state of wretchedness, gazing at the portrait. And when the sun rose, he rose also, and got somehow through the day, by the help of Rasakósha and the garden. Then when the sun set, they went again to the hall of audience. And there they saw the Princess, clad in a copper-coloured robe, and a bodice of burnished silver, and her crown and other ornaments, sitting on her throne. And her eyes sparkled when she saw the King, who sank upon a couch, speechless and fascinated, under the spell of her beauty. Then Rasakósha came forward and stood before her, and began again:

Lady, once upon a time a young and handsome bee, that had till then grown up at home and been fed by his parents, set out for the first time in his life on an expedition to fetch flower-nectar for the purpose of making honey. And attracted by its fragrance he flew to a red lotus, growing on a pool in the forest, and was about to drain her of her

sweetness. But the lotus closed her flower, and would not let him enter, saying: O bee, you come here, after the manner of your *caste*, insolently pushing into me, and seeking to rob me of my nectar, expecting to get all for nothing. Learn that you must buy my nectar of me. Then the bee buzzed and said: What shall I give you for it? What is there that you can want? Is it not enough for you to blow and bloom on this pool, scenting the air? Then the lotus said: There is still something wanting. Out upon you, foolish bee! You, a bee, not to know what I want! Go away, and find out, and then come back to me, if you want any of my nectar.

Then the bee buzzed violently in anger, and flew away to find out what the lotus wanted. And he saw a beetle busily grubbing in the earth at the foot of a tree. So he said: O beetle, tell me what the lotus wants. But the beetle answered: What is a lotus to me? Go elsewhere; I have no leisure. So the bee flew off and saw a spider building a web in a branch. And he asked him. And the spider said: What she wants is doubtless a fly. But the bee thought: It cannot be a fly. This spider judges others by himself. And seeing a cloud floating in the air above him, he flew up and asked it: O cloud, what does the lotus want? The cloud said: Rain-drops. So the bee flew back and

offered water to the lotus. But she said: I get that from the cloud and from the pool, not from you. Try again. So he flew away, and saw a sunbeam playing on a blade of grass, and asked it what the lotus wanted. The sunbeam said: Warmth. So the bee flew back, bringing with him a fire-fly, and tried to warm the lotus. But she said: I get warmth from the sun, not from you. Try again. Then the bee flew off again, and saw an owl blinking in a tree; and he buzzed in his ear and roused him, and said: O owl, tell me what the lotus wants. The owl said: Sleep. And the bee flew back, and said to the lotus: I will lull you to sleep by humming to you, and fanning you with my wings. But the lotus answered: I get sleep from the night, not from you. Try again.

Then the bee in despair flew away, crying aloud: What in the world can this niggardly and capricious lotus want of me? And as fate would have it, his cry was overheard by an old hermit, who lived in the forest, and knew the language of all beasts and birds. And he called to the bee, and said: O thou dull-witted bee, this is what the lotus wants: and he told him. Then the bee was delighted, and flew away to the lotus, and gave her what she wanted. And she opened her flower, and he went in and stole her nectar.

Now tell me, Princess, what did the bee give the

lotus? And Rasakósha ceased. And the Princess blushed,[1] and said: He gave her a kiss.

And when she had spoken, she rose up and went out, without looking at the King, and the King's heart went with her. But the King and Rasakósha returned to their own apartments.

DAY SIXTEEN

THE STORY OF THE GEM IN THE SNAKE'S HOOD

Then the King said to Rasakósha in ecstasy and despair: My friend, though owing to the answer of the Princess five days only now remain to me, yet I would not have had to-day's answer otherwise for all my kingdom; and freely do I forgive you. Oh! her confusion when she spoke almost broke my heart in twain, and if I dared, I would venture to think that she does not view me with indifference. But alas! how am I to survive the period of separation? For all virtue has gone out of the portrait, and from snow to cool my fever, it has now become a fire to increase it. And the King passed the night in a state of apprehension, alternately gazing at and flinging

[1] This is not a strict translation. Hindoo ladies, so far as my experience goes, do not blush: they "exhibit shame." But as the emotion is clearly the same, I have employed the English equivalent.

aside the portrait. And when the sun rose, he rose also, and hardly managed to get through the day with the aid of Rasakósha and the garden. And when the sun set, they went again to the hall of audience. And there they saw the Princess, clad in a robe of pearl-grey, and a bodice studded with agates, and her crown and other ornaments, sitting on her throne. And she looked shyly at the King, who sank upon a couch, speechless and fascinated, under the spell of her beauty. Then Rasakósha came forward and stood before her, and began again:

Lady, outside the wall of a certain city there was an old sacred banian tree. And in its hollow root there lived a black cobra. And every day it used to come out and lie in the sun before the tree, coiled round upon itself, and the people brought it offerings of milk and sweetmeats.

Now in that city there lived a very rich jewel merchant, who had a very beautiful daughter. And she was very fond of gems and precious stones, of which she possessed a very great number. But there was one which she had not got, and that was the jewel in the head of a snake. And this she desired so much that she thought all her other jewels of no account in comparison with it. And she heard of the sacred cobra, and being filled with cupidity, she hired a man of the Dómba

caste to go by night and kill it, and bring her the gem in its hood. And when she had obtained it, she considered that she had obtained the fruit of her birth, and she valued it above all her other jewels, and wore it incessantly as a crest-jewel in her hair.

But Wásuki [1] heard of the slaughter of his subject, and he was wroth, and determined to punish the criminal. So he assumed the form of a man, and went to that city. And he made enquiries, till at length he discovered that a certain merchant's daughter possessed the hood-gem of a snake. Then the lord of snakes assumed the form of a young and handsome jewel merchant. And he hired a house, close to that of the jewel merchant, and giving out that he was travelling on business, he lived magnificently, and gave feasts and banquets to all whom he met. And becoming acquainted with that jewel merchant, he charmed him by his wealth and accomplishments, and gave him many rare and inestimable jewels. And finally, he asked him for the hand of his daughter in marriage. And the merchant joyfully consented, thinking that nowhere in the world could he find such another son-in-law. And when he told his daughter, she was beside herself with delight, for she had seen that young

[1] The king of the snakes.

merchant from a window, and heard of his great wealth and accomplishments; and she thought she was going to get, as it were, the very ocean itself for a husband.[1]

Then an auspicious day was chosen, and the preparations for the wedding went on: and every day the lord of snakes sent baskets of jewels to his bride, whose senses almost left her in her joy. And at last the day came, and the nuptial ceremony was over, and the bridegroom went with his bride into the nuptial chamber. And he lifted her on to the marriage bed, and called her by her name. And as she turned towards him, he approached her slowly, with a smile on his face. And she looked and saw, issuing from his mouth and disappearing alternately, a long tongue, thin, forked, and quivering like that of a snake.

And in the morning the musicians played to waken the bride and bridegroom. But the day went on, and they never came forth. Then the merchant, her father, and his friends, after waiting a long time, became alarmed, and went and broke the door, which was closed with a lock. And there they saw the bride lying dead in the bed, alone, and on her bosom were two small

[1] *I. e.*, "the mine, or receptacle of jewels," a common appellation of the sea.

marks. And they saw no bridegroom. But a black cobra crept out of the bed, and disappeared through a hole in the wall.[1]

So now, Princess, tell me, what was there in the snake's hood-jewel to make that merchant's daughter so desirous of it? And Rasakósha ceased. Then the Princess said: The attraction lay not in the jewel itself, nor in its magic properties, but in this: that she had not got it. For this is the nature of women, that they make light of what they have, and sigh for what they have not.

And when the Princess had spoken, she rose up and went out, looking at the King with a deep sigh, and the King's heart went with her. But the King and Rasakósha returned to their own apartments.

DAY SEVENTEEN

THE STORY OF THE KING'S DREAM

Then the King said to Rasakósha: My friend, all doubt is over: my doom is sealed: for the intellect of the Princess is invincible. And yet,

[1] The *dénouement* of this story has a most singular resemblance to that of Prosper Mérimée's *Lokis*. But apparently he drew that admirable story (as he did his *Carmen* and his *Venus*) from older sources, of Lithuanian, Gipsy, possibly even Hindoo origin.

unless my desire blinds me, she intended that sigh to point at me the significance of her words. Oh! the fear of losing her almost deprives me of my reason, and breaking loose like a *must* elephant from every restraint I shall destroy you, as he does his friend the *mahout*, by the most terrible of deaths. And yet my own lot will be worse than any death; for I shall die by inches, starving in the sight of food. Out upon the portrait that has brought me to ruin, and on the painter that painted it! For now I see clearly that it is not in the least like her; for she is kind, and only compelled by destiny in the form of her own intellect to ruin hopes that she would perhaps otherwise encourage. So the King passed the night in a state of exhaustion, averting with effort his gaze from the portrait. And when the sun rose, he rose also, and passed the day with difficulty in the garden, aided by Rasakósha. Then when the sun set, they went again to the hall of audience. And there they saw the Princess, clad in a robe of russet [1] and a bodice studded with amber,[2] and her crown and other ornaments, sitting on her throne. And she looked at the King with eyes whose lids were red with want of sleep, and he sank upon a couch, speechless and

[1] *Kapisha.*
[2] *Trinamani*, a gem that attracts grass.

fascinated, under the spell of her beauty. Then Rasakósha came forward and stood before her, and began again:

Lady,[1] there was once a king, who laughed at his kingly duties, and passed his time in evil courses, lying in bed, neglecting Brahmans, drinking wine, hunting, and idling in the society of fair women. And whosoever ventured to remonstrate with him, him he straightway banished from his kingdom. And as time went on, he grew worse and worse, for dissatisfaction and satiety came over him, and the only refuge open to him from their torture lay in drowning reflection by still more abominable orgies.

Then it happened that one day he went a-hunting. And the ardour of the chase drew him far out of his way, so that when the sun fell, he was deep in the forest, far from his palace. And while he was considering where he should pass the night, he came upon the hut of an aged hermit. So leaving his followers in the forest, he remained in the hut of that hospitable hermit for the night. And after making his supper on roots and fruits, he lay down to sleep on a bed of leaves and *Kusha* grass.

And in his sleep he had a vision. He thought

[1] This story is only the embodiment of an idea familar to every Hindoo, but in the original it is very pithily told.

he found himself on the bank of a great river, lit up by the sun where he stood, but emerging from black darkness, and running into it again in a circle. And he held in his hand a seed. And digging a hole, he planted that seed, and watered it from the river, and it became a shoot, and grew rapidly into a tall tree. And the tree put forth leaves, and blossoms, and at last a single fruit. And the fruit grew larger and larger, till it was as big as a gourd; and it became green as an emerald, and then red as a ruby, and shone in the sun; and its weight caused it to sink down within reach of his hand. So he put out his hand, and plucked, and ate it.

And in an instant he saw a colossal hand stretched out of the darkness, and it grasped him and whisked him away, and suspended him over an abyss by a slender string. And looking down, he gazed into unfathomable depths; and looking up, he saw a vulture pecking at the string with its beak; and an icy chill froze his heart, while burning fire tortured his extremities, and black darkness enveloped him; and it seemed to him that infinite ages passed in each instant of ineffable agony. Then on a sudden he awoke with a cry, and saw only that old hermit standing in the moonlight that fell through the roof, meditating, and muttering to himself.

Then he lay down again on the bed, and slept and dreamed again. And again it seemed to him that he planted a seed, and watered it on the bank of that river; and again it became a tree, and put out leaves and blossoms and a fruit, which as before grew green and red, and sank down into his hand. And he plucked and ate it again. And in an instant, a feeling of inexpressible bliss flowed in upon his soul, and he sank into a deep sleep, and lay as if he were dead, till that old hermit roused him in the morning with the sun streaming in through the door of the hut.

Then that king went home and changed his ways.

So now tell me, Princess, why? And Rasakósha ceased. Then the Princess said: He was afraid. For the tree was the tree of his own evil actions, and the eating of its fruit the ripening of their consequences, dooming him to a punishment of which the agony he endured in his dream was but a faint shadow. But had he lived otherwise, and accumulated virtue rather than vice, he would have obtained ultimately the bliss of emancipation, resembling the deep sleep which came upon him and obliterated his individuality, the second time he slept.

And when the Princess had spoken, she turned and looked at the King with tears in her eyes, and

rose up and went out, and the King's heart went with her. But the King and Rasakósha returned to their own apartments.

DAY EIGHTEEN

THE STORY OF LOVE AND DEATH

Then the King said to Rasakósha: My friend, now in very truth am I eating the fruit of my own crimes in a former birth, since four days only remain; and well did you say that I am suspended by the heels over an unfathomable abyss, with ice at my heart. For only too well do I see that the Princess will stand the test, seeing that the sharp arrows of your cunning questions rebound from her as if, instead of a jewelled bodice, she were clad in a coat of mail. And the nectar of the portrait has become a poison, which will certainly put an end to me before morning. So the King passed the night in a state of despondency, with his back to the portrait. And when the sun rose, he rose also, and hardly contrived to pass the day by the help of Rasakósha and the garden. Then when the sun set, they went again to the hall of audience. And there they saw the Princess, clad in a robe of Indian red, and a bodice studded with sea-gems,[1] and her crown and other ornaments,

[1] *Lóhita.* The sea-gem is perhaps some kind of pearl.

sitting on her throne. And she looked at the King, and drooped her head like a flower, and the King sank upon a couch, speechless and fascinated, under the spell of her beauty. Then Rasakósha came forward and stood before her, and began again:

Lady, a certain lover was bewailing the death of his mistress, and he exclaimed: O Death, thou art strong; but O Love, thou art stronger. And it happened that Yama [1] heard him. So he said to the god who has a row of bees for a bowstring [2]: Hear what nonsense that foolish fellow is prattling. But Kámadéwa replied: It is not nonsense, but the truth. I am the stronger. So a dispute arose between them as to which of them was the stronger. And after a while, Kámadéwa said: What is the use of talking? Let us put the matter to the test, and make trial of our power. And Yama said: So be it. And they chose for the subjects of their experiments three things: a hero, a *nyagródha* [3] tree, and the heart of a sage.

Then Yama went first to the tree, and smote its roots with death. But as fast as they died, the

[1] The god of death (pronounce Yum).

[2] Káma, or Kámadéwa, the god of love. His names are innumerable.

[3] "Down-grower," the banian, which lets down roots from its branches.

branches, inspired by Káma, let down roots from above, and they struck into the earth, and became new trunks, and grew up and produced new branches, which did the same continually. So after a while Yama was tired and stopped, and there was the tree as strong as ever.

Then Kámadéwa said: See, I have conquered. But Yama said: Wait and see. And he went to the hero, and struck him down when he was fighting in the front of the battle, and he died. But Smara [1] inspired the people of that country; and they mourned for that hero, and built him a splendid pillar; and poets sang his glorious deeds, and mothers called their children by his name, and they worshipped him as an incarnation of deity in the temples.

Then Kámadéwa said: See, again I have conquered. Acknowledge that I am the stronger. But Yama said: Wait and see. And he went to the sage, as he was practising terrible austerities in the forest, and struck his heart and killed it. But even as he did so, Desire sprang up in it [2] again ever anew, and ever-fresh attachments to the objects of sense, and so the battle went on continually in the heart of that sage, as it alternately became dead to the world, and then again

[1] A name for Love which also means memory.
[2] One of the common names of Love is "the mind-born."

alive, and subject to the influence of the pleasures of mundane existence.

Then Kámadéwa said: See, once more I am proved to be the stronger. The victory is mine. Confess that you are beaten. But Yama said: For all that, I am the stronger, and that lover was a babbler. And Kámadéwa laughed at him and mocked him.

So now tell me, Princess, which is the stronger? And Rasakósha ceased. Then the Princess turned very pale,[1] and said in a low voice: Kámadéwa is cunning, and, like a dishonest gambler, loaded his dice to win. For in particular instances and limited times, he appears to be the stronger. And therefore it was that he challenged Yama, knowing very well that all instances must of necessity be limited to a place and time. But nevertheless Yama is stronger than he. For he is unlimited, being Time itself, without beginning or end,[2] and that power, whose nature it is to be unsusceptible of bounds, can no more be exhibited by particular instances than the ceaseless flow of the Ganges can be contained in a single jar.

[1] She turned pale, possibly because she saw that her love for the King must have an end: but still more probably because she was afraid of offending the God of Love by not deciding in his favour.

[2] *Kála*, Time, is another name for Yama. The answer of the Princess is clever in the extreme.

And when the Princess had spoken, she rose up and went out, looking at the King with eyes of sorrow, and the King's heart went with her. But the King and Rasakósha returned to their own apartments.

DAY NINETEEN

THE STORY OF KRITÁKRITA

Then the King said to Rasakósha: My friend, now I may offer water [1] to my happiness, and this is the beginning of the end. For three days only now remain to me, and these will assuredly follow in the footsteps of their predecessors, and so shall I.[2] Then will my sun set for ever. Alas! I read my fate in the sorrow that filled my beloved's eyes, as she looked at me like a frightened fawn. O that she were either less beautiful or less intelligent, for in the union of these two virtues lies my destruction. Away with the portrait, which burns me like fire! So the King passed the night in a state of delirium, paying no heed to the portrait. And when the sun rose, he rose also, and passed the day, half living and half dead, in the garden with Rasakósha. And when the sun

[1] *I.e.*, it is all over with me. Water is offered to the spirits of departed ancestors.

[2] *I.e.*, I shall fail in my suit, like the others. The following sentence is a play on his own name.

set, they went again to the hall of audience. And there they saw the Princess, clad in a robe of cloth of gold and a bodice studded with turquoises, and her crown and other ornaments, sitting on her throne. And she looked at the King with eyes in which joy and grief fought for the mastery: and the King sank upon a couch, speechless and fascinated, under the spell of her beauty. Then Rasakósha came forward and stood before her and began again:

Lady, there was once a Brahman named Kritákrita,[1] who neglected the study of the Wédas, and walked in the black path, abandoning all his duties,[2] and associating with gamblers, harlots, and outcasts. And he frequented the cemeteries at night, and became familiar with ghosts and vampires and dead bodies, and impure and unholy rites and incantations. And one night, amid the flaming of funeral pyres and the reek of burning corpses, a certain Vampire[3] of his acquaintance said to him: I am hungry: bring me fresh meat to devour, or I will tear you in pieces. Then Kritákrita said: I will bring it,

[1] "Done and not done."

[2] *Áchárabhrashta*, an apostate or decasted person. See *Manu*, I., 108.

[3] *Wétála*, an uncanny being, generally possessing magic powers, given to occupying empty corpses and devouring human flesh.

but not for nothing. What will you give me for it? The Vampire replied: Bring me a newly slain Brahman, and I will teach you a spell for raising the dead. But Kritákrita said: That is not enough. And they haggled in the cemetery about the price. At last that abandoned Brahman said: Throw in a pair of dice that will enable me always to win at play, and I will bring you the flesh you require. So the Vampire said: Be it so. Then Kritákrita went away, and knowing no other resource, secretly murdered his own brother, and brought him to the cemetery at midnight. And the Vampire kept his word, giving him the dice, and teaching him the spell.

Then some time afterwards, Kritákrita said to himself: I will try the efficacy of this spell that the Vampire has taught me. So he procured the body of a dead Chándála,[1] and taking it at the dead of night to the cemetery, placed it on the ground, and began to recite the spell. But when he had got halfway through, he looked at the corpse, and saw its left arm, and leg, and eye moving horribly with life, the other half being still dead. And he was so terrified at the sight, that he utterly forgot the rest of the spell, and leaped up and ran away. But the corpse jumped

[1] The lowest caste, whose very proximity was pollution to a Brahman.

up also, and a vampire entered its dead half, and it rushed rapidly after him, shuffling on one leg, and rolling its one eye, and yelling indistinctly: *Underdone, overdone, undone!* [1] But Kritákrita fled at full speed to his house, and getting into bed lay there trembling. And after a while he fell asleep. And then suddenly he awoke, hearing a noise, and he looked and saw the door open, and the corpse of that dead Chándála came in, and shuffled swiftly towards him on its left leg, rolling its left eye, with its dead half hanging down beside it, and crying in a terrible voice: *Underdone, overdone, undone!* And Kritákrita sprang out of bed, and ran out by another door, and mounting a horse, fled as fast as he could to another city a great way off.

And there he thought: Here I am safe. So he went day by day to the gambling hall, and playing with his dice, won great sums of money, and lived at his ease, feasting himself and others. But one night, when he was sitting among the gamblers in the gambling hall, throwing the dice, he heard behind him a noise of shuffling. And he looked round, and saw, coming swiftly towards him on one leg, the corpse of that dead Chándála, with its dead half rotting and hanging down, and its

[1] This is all one word in the original, *únádhikákritamkritam*, "what has been done is too little, too much, and not done at all."

left eye rolling in anger, and calling out in a voice of thunder: *Underdone, overdone, undone!* And he rose up with a shriek, and leaped over the table, and fled away by an opposite door and left that city, and ran as fast as he could, constantly looking behind him through the forest for many days and nights, never daring to stop even to take breath, till he reached another city a long way off. And there he remained, disguised and concealed, as it were in a hole. But all the gamblers in that gambling saloon died of fear.

And after some time he again accumulated wealth by gambling in that city, and lived in extravagance at his ease. But one night, when he was sitting with an *hetæra* whom he loved, in the inner room of her house, he heard the noise of shuffling. And he looked round, and saw once more the corpse of that dead Chándála coming swiftly towards him on one leg, with its dead half, from whose bones the flesh had rotted away, hanging down, and its left eye blazing with flames of rage, calling out with a voice like the scream of Ráwana: *Underdone, overdone, undone!* Then that *hetæra* then and there abandoned the body in her terror. And Kritákrita rose up, and ran out by a door, which led out upon the balcony, while the Chándála hastened after him. And finding no other outlet, Kritákrita flung

himself down into the street, and was dashed to pieces, and died.

So now tell me, Princess, what did that corpse mean by his words? And Rasakósha ceased. Then the Princess said: There is no difficulty in this. Woe to the feeble souls that have not courage to carry through what they have the presumption to begin! They do indeed either too little or too much, and are themselves their own undoing. For the strong in virtue avoid sin altogether; while the daring in vice face the consequences of their own conduct: those attain heavenly rewards, and these the good things of this world; but the coward souls who are too weak to be either virtuous or vicious are punished by that very weakness in the form of their consciousness of guilt, and lose both worlds.

And when the Princess had spoken, she rose up and went out, looking, and yet as it were not looking, at the King, whose heart went with her. But the King and Rasakósha returned to their own apartments.

DAY TWENTY

CONCLUSION

Then the King said to Rasakósha: My friend, I have been bitten by the beauty of this incom-

parable woman as by a black cobra, and now the poison works. I have but two more days to live. For certain it is that her answer to your last question will be my sentence of death, and equally certain it is, that she will give that answer; for her intellect is like the edge of a sharp sword, which while it cuts the knot of the problem will at the same moment pierce me to the heart. And the King passed the night in a state of despair, leaving his bed untouched. And when the sun rose, he rose also, and went out alone into the garden, and wandered about, dreading the setting of the sun, yet longing for reunion with his beloved, till his soul was almost riven in twain with opposite emotions. And he reproached Wináyaka, saying: O thou of the Ruddy Trunk, I have been deceived by thee; and instead of clearing my road to success, thou hast blocked it by an insurmountable obstacle in the form of this lady's piercing acuteness of understanding. And then he said: This is no time for despair. Let me not, like Kritákrita, leave my work half finished, but rather endeavour myself to discover some riddle that she cannot answer. And yet what hope is there that where Rasakósha has failed, I should succeed? For the Princess is not more skilful in answering his questions than he in composing them, being, as it were, a very ocean of stories in human form.

Or rather, no mortal, but only a god, could pose the ingenuity of this lovely lady. Then he prayed to Saraswatí, saying: O goddess of speech, my only refuge is in thy favour. O befriend me, and either cloud the mind of my beloved with temporary bewilderment, or else reveal to me some puzzle which she will be unable to answer. Truly, my puzzle is worse than hers.

And on the instant, Saraswatí put a thought into his heart. And he sprang up with a shout of joy, exclaiming: Ha! I am favoured. Victory to Saraswatí! The Princess is mine! And he ran quickly to find Rasakósha, whom he discovered buried in profound meditation on a story for the coming evening, and said: My friend, away with meditation! *Εὕρηκα*![1] I will myself propose a riddle to the Princess this evening. Then Rasakósha said: O King, I congratulate you. But still, in a matter of such importance, let us risk nothing by presumptuous confidence. So propound your riddle to me first, that we may make trial of its difficulty. Then King Súryakánta laughed in delight, and said: Your very doubt shows that it is unanswerable. My own case is the very problem. I will go to the Princess, and ask her what I ought to do. And if she tells me, then I will ask her to-morrow what she tells

[1] Literally, "the object is attained."

me to-day; and if she does not tell me, then she is mine, according to the terms of the agreement, to-day; and so in either alternative, the bird [1] is caged.

Then Rasakósha said with a smile: Victory to your Majesty! Truly wonderful is the power of love: like a stone it at once blunts and sharpens the edge of intellect. For it formerly blinded you to everything in the world, and now it has sharpened your sight so as to discover what has escaped us all this time, though lying, as it were, on the road before us. But unless I am deceived by the external signs, I predict that the god of love will also blind the Princess; or rather, that she will throw herself gladly into the cage. For none are so easily caught as those who wish to be; and though the Princess has been adamant to my questions, she will be soft as a flower to yours.

Then in his impatience the King could hardly endure the remainder of the day, burning with desire to put his question to the Princess. But at last the sun set. Then Rasakósha said: O King, go you alone to the hall of audience. For my absence will do you more service to-day than my presence did before. There are cases when a friend shows his friendship rather by his absence than his presence. Apropos, I will tell you a

[1] Here there is a pun.

story: Listen. But the King said: My friend, this is no time for stories, even though told by you. And though I will go alone to-night, without you, yet know, that should I achieve success by the favour of Saraswatí and the Lord of Obstacles, I shall nevertheless owe it to you rather than myself. For not only have you sustained my life daily, during the hours of separation, but your stories have been, as it were, a ladder, by which I have ascended step by step to the window of my beloved's chamber. And does not the lowest rung of the ladder contribute equally with the highest to the attainment of the summit of hope? Then Rasakósha laughed, and said: O King, it is well. Now go, and though you have not heard my story, yet I have attained in some measure the end I had in view in proposing it. For you have kept the Princess waiting, and expectation increases desire. Good luck be with you!

Then the King left him and went very quickly by himself to the hall of audience. And his right arm throbbed as he drew near the door, and, rejoicing at the omen, he went in. And there he saw Anangarágá, clad in a robe of the hue of indigo,[1] and a bodice rainbow-hued like the neck

[1] This has a meaning: see note 1, p. 131. The sunstone is probably a topaz.

of a pigeon, and studded with yellow sunstones, and her crown and other ornaments; but she had left her throne and come towards the door, and was looking with anxiety for the King. But when she saw him, she blushed,[1] and returned in confusion to her throne. And King Súryakánta went up to her, and fell down before her and took her by the hand, and said: Lady, there was once a King, who became suitor to a Princess, lovely like thyself, on this condition, that if he could ask her a question that she could not answer, she should be his. Now tell me, O thou lovely incarnation of wisdom, what should he ask her?

And instantly the Princess rose up quickly, and exclaimed in delight: O clever one, thou hast guessed. And she threw round his neck the necklace of her arms, and so chose him as her husband.[2] And she said: See, thy image is reflected a thousand times in these gems that resemble thee; yet look in my eyes, and thou shalt see thyself through them reflected in my heart. Then the King looked into her eyes, and saw himself reflected in them like the sun in a deep lake. And he whispered in the shell of her ear: Thou hast robbed me of myself: give me back myself in thy

[1] See note, p. 104.

[2] This is an allusion to the *swayamwara*, an old ceremony by which a maiden chose her own husband by throwing a garland round his neck.

form. Then the Princess said, in a low voice, looking down: Wouldst thou take my sweetness for nothing? What did the bee give the lotus? And the King trembled with passion, and putting his hand beneath her chin, he raised her face and kissed her on her ruby mouth. And in that moment he forgot everything, and he felt his life surging through him like a wave of the sea, and he became blind and deaf, and tottered on his feet. Then Anangarágá roused him from his stupor by saying: Wert thou afraid of losing me? And he said: O my beloved, I am saved from the mouth of death. Then she laughed low, and said: There was no cause for fear. For had I again answered a question to-day, I would have refused to answer to-morrow, even though thou hadst asked me nothing but my own name. But I could scarcely endure to wait till to-morrow, and it is better as it is. Then the King said: And why, O thou rogue, didst thou not refuse to answer before, and save me from torture? And Anangarágá said: It was torture also to me. And yet I know not why, but there was nectar in the poison, and know, O my lord, that this is the nature of women, that they love to torment their lover, and refuse him what they themselves most of all desire.

Then King Súryakánta almost swooned away

from excess of joy. And he said: Come, let us leave this place, which is hateful to me as the scene of my sufferings, and let us return without delay to my capital. And the Princess said: As my lord pleases.

Then the King sent Rasakósha, with all the retinue of the Princess, on before. But he himself set out at night alone with his bride. And they rode on slowly, side by side, through the forest in the moonlight, he on a white horse, and she on a black, looking like the beauty of day and night incarnate in mortal form. And at midnight they stopped to rest in the forest. And the King lifted Anangarágá from her horse, and placed her in a bower of creepers under a great tree. And the moon shone with warm rays through the interstices of the leaves as through the marble trellis of a palace terrace. And there on a bed of leaves and flowers, he made her his wife by the Gándharwa [1] marriage rite. And he played with the tresses of her blue-black hair, through which her eyes shone like moonstones in the moonlight; and he wove red *ashóka* flowers in her hair, and hung blue lotuses on her bosom,

[1] See *Manu*, III., 26. Though recognised as a legitimate marriage, especially for Kshatriyas, it was simply the union of two lovers without any rites at all. This suits it admirably for fairy tale and romance, and makes it a great favourite with the poets.

and put a girdle of white lotuses round her waist, and tied anklets of jasmine blossoms on her feet. And in the ecstasy of his passion, bewildered by her beauty, he exclaimed: Well art thou called Anangarágá, O my beloved; and yet a single name is insufficient to describe the infinite variety of thy thousand-rayed loveliness. Thou art Mrigalóchaná, for thine eyes are lustrous and frightened like the antelope's; and Nílanaliní, for thy dark hair is like a pool for the lotuses of thine eyes; and Madanalílálólatá, for those eyes dance with the tremulous light of love; and Shashilékhá, for thou art fair and fragile as a digit of the moon; and Bujalatá, for thy arms are curved and cling like creepers; and Kusumayashtí, for thy body is straight and slender like the stalk of a flower; and Kambukanthí, for thy neck is like a shell; and Rajanícháyá, for the sheen of thy beauty is like that of the night; and Láwanyamúrtí, for thou art the very incarnation of the perfection of loveliness; and Manóháriní, for thou ravishest my soul; and Madalaharí, for thou art a wave of the sea of intoxication; and Alipriyá, for the bees resort to the honey of thy lips, mistaking them for a flower; and Wajrasúchí, for thy intellect is like a diamond needle; and Hémakumbhiní, for thy bosom resembles a pair of golden gourds; and Pulinákrití, for the curves of thy hips are like the

swell of a river bank; and Nánárúpiní, for thy beauty is infinite; and Bhrúkutíchalá, for the play of thy brows is like the lightning in the clouds; and yet all these names are powerless to paint thy celestial and overpowering fascination, which maddens me as I gaze at it. Then Anangarágá said, with a smile: O my lord, thou hast omitted, among all these names, the only one that really belongs to me. And the King said: What is that? Then she said: Thou art my deity, and I am possessed by thee in every particle of my being; and therefore call me Nílirágá, for my devotion [1] to thee shall be constant and indelible as the dye of indigo. And know, O sun of my soul, that without this all the beauty of women is but nectar-poison.

Then the King's heart almost broke in his joy, and he exclaimed: Ha! I have obtained the fruit of my birth. All else is nothingness and futility. What can the future hold for me but this, or its absence, which would be worse than a thousand deaths? And he prayed to the all-powerful and self-existent One,[2] saying: O Mahéshwara, let this heaven continue for ever, and let the chain of my existence be broken at this point! Or rather, let Time be destroyed for me, and let me remain,

[1] *Bhakti* is almost untranslatable. It means the absorbed and total love, faith, devotion of a worshipper for his god.

[2] Shiwa.

beyond its influence, for evermore in this present, this moment of union with my beloved!

And that moon-crested god heard him, and granted his wish. And he shot at that pair of lovers, as they slept in one another's arms in the moonlit creeper bower, a glance of his third eye, and reduced them to ashes. But he said: The chain of their existence cannot yet be broken, for they have not yet earned emancipation by penance and austerities. But they shall meet again, and be husband and wife in another birth.



A Heifer of the Dawn

(उस्रियासंभृतामृता)

अप स्वसुरुषसो नग्जिहीते रिणक्ति कृष्णीररुषाय पंथां

"Lo! how Dark Night shrinks from her sister Dawn, and gloomy Black gives way to Rosy Red."—
Rig Weda, vii. 71.

SODALIBUS NONDUM DEFUNCTIS SALUTEM

ANIMULA · VAGULA · BLANDULA
HOSPES · COMESQUE · CORPORIS
FLAMMÂ · PROCUL · SCINTILLULA
ORCI · TENEBRIS · OBRUTA
CALIGINOSIS · HEU! VEHOR
ἴδωλον · UMBRAE · FABULA
CEU · NIGRA · CONJUX · INDICA
FUNCTO · MARITI · CORPORE
POENAMQUE · NASCI · JUDICO
NEC · VIVA · JAM · NEC · MORTUA
QUALISQUE · VESPERTILIO
DIO · RELAPSO · LUMINE
NOCTURNA · DEGO · TAEDIA
DONEC · RESURGET · LUCIFER

Preface

ALL SWEETNESS, says the Rig Weda, IS COLLECTED IN THE HEIFER[1]: the Red One of the Dawn. And the Oriental use of the word *heifer*, to signify a wife or queen, is familiar to every reader of the Hebrew Bible. If ye had not ploughed with my heifer, said Samson, ye had not found out my riddle. Thus the meaning of the title of this little story is at once clear: *the collected sweetness of the heifer:* i. e., the ambrosia[2] of the early morning, in a feminine form.

All know it, the nectar of dawn, who are wise enough to rise, like the hero of this story, before the sun. And yet, perhaps it is necessary to live in the East, properly to appreciate the meaning of morning. Love, for example, is a very old God: as some of the ancient Greeks told us, even

[1] iii. 30, 14. (The translation is literally exact: *wishwam swádma sambhritam usriyáyam.*)

[2] The feminine form, *amritá*, is the name of one of the digits of the moon. And apropos: could we penetrate into the darkness of mythological origins, we might perhaps discover that the *half-moon* on the forehead of Maheshwara is related to the *horns* of his bull. And similarly, Isis, the *hornèd moon* = Io, the *heifer*.

the very oldest of all.[1] Why is that? Because he comes out of the East: he belongs to the Dawn. Eros, Eos, Aurora, Ushas, Arusha. First comes Night, and Chaos: and then, out of the black there arises, silently, imperceptibly, irresistibly, the glorious, the blushing, the beautiful, amber-clouded, opal-shredded, amethyst-bedappled Dawn. O Dawn, how I do love thee! how, after a night of blackness and distress, has thy delicious fragrance raised me from the dead, with its colour and its camphor and the nectar touch of its rosy finger, softer than flowers, cooler than sandal-wood. Yes, it is necessary to be a dweller in the East, to taste and understand the religion of the Dawn.

And the heifer? What is the secret of the rooted affection of the Aryan and Iranian, the Weda and Awesta, for the Cow?

Partly, no doubt, its utilitarian value. But they are deceived, who think that this is all. There is religion[2] in it, mysticism, æsthetic affection. The Cow is an Idea. This was first brought home to the translator in the following way.

[1] As also in Rig Weda, 10. 129. 4.

[2] If you like, superstition. But it is not growing weaker. I have repeatedly suggested, to comparatively emancipated Hindoos, that cows might be killed. The very possibility was always repudiated with horror and disgust.

Passing through Rajputána, he came to Jeypore. And it happened, on a hot afternoon, that he was rambling in its outskirts, ankle-deep in white dust,—for Jeypore stands on the edge of Marústhalí, "the region of death,"—and suddenly he came upon a cluster of *chattris*, yellow marble memorial tombs of old kings, and he lay down to rest in their shade. And there as he lay, blessing the old rájá whose *umbrella* afforded a refuge for the suppliant even after his death—there came along the blinding, glaring white way, with noiseless footfall, a little mouse-coloured heifer, bowing its head from side to side, as it stepped on daintily in the dust, with great, wise, black, lustrous, beautiful eyes. On its back was a pile of red clothing: on that again, a great bowl or basin of brass: and in the bowl sat, like a little deity, sucking its thumb, and crooning to itself some monotonous ditty, a tiny Hindoo child. The fierce, furious glare of the sun was collected as it were into a focus of white light on its bare head, and glinted from its glossy, jet-black hair. Moved to adoration, the spectator seized his opportunity as they wandered by, and offered tribute and homage to the Mother and the Child. A pair of great eyes stared at him with alarm, but the slender little brown fingers shut down instinctively over the silver rupee. Then they passed on, the

little deity and its tutelary "vehicle," [1] moving delicately with that undulating hesitation which the Creator has bestowed only upon women and cows, reached the black jaws of a street narrow as a door, rounded the corner, and disappeared.

Since then, every heifer, and for the sake of the heifer, also even every ox, has possessed for the writer a touch of divinity. The roast beef of Old England savours of cannibalism, as often as he looks into their great reproachful eyes: eyes out of which look back at you the infinite patience, the imperturbable repose, and the stubborn intractability of the inscrutable East.

POONA, December 17, 1903.

[1] Every Hindoo deity has his (or her) "vehicle," or *váhana*.

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[To appreciate this *anthology*, the English reader should remember, that according to the Hindoos, flowers are not only the arrows of the God of Love, but the very stuff of which his bow is made: bees are his bowstring, and Madhu, or Spring, is his *âme damnée* and sworn ally.]

A Heifer of the Dawn

A POLITICAL ALLIANCE

INVOCATION

Salutation to the great Third eye of the Master of all Emotion: that eye, which could wither the God of Love with shooting flames, and yet open, to her confusion, with the tenderness of a flower on the bashful Párwatí, as she was endeavouring to rob him of the sight of her own beauty by placing her hands over the other two! [1]

THERE lived formerly, in another *kalpa*, a stupid king, who possessed two things, that like the edge of a sword kept him from sleeping: a brave enemy and a beautiful daughter: for his enemy was too strong, and his daughter too clever for him: moreover, his enemy was young, and his daughter unmarried. And after racking his brains to no purpose for a long time, there came to him at last, as he lay awake one night, a thought. And he

[1] The details of this conjugal episode between Shíwa and his wife may be found in the *Kumára Sambhawa*, the *chef d'œuvre of* Kálidás.

exclaimed: Ha! I will mix this poison and this nectar, and pour the sea of my daughter's beauty over the fire of my enemy's hostility, and so extinguish it altogether: and gain for my kingdom, security, and for my daughter, a husband, and for myself, rest, and a release from anxiety. And this idea pleased him so much that he shouted aloud. Then all the guards, thinking that he was in danger, ran in with lights. And they saw the King stark naked, skipping about the room like a calf, waving his hands, and exclaiming: Ha! my enemy! ha! my daughter! So they said: Surely, his short wits have come to an end, and now he is mad. But the King sent for musicians, and rose up then and there, and made merry all night, waiting with impatience for the day.

Then in the morning he chose a messenger, and sent him away to his enemy, and said to him, by the mouth of his envoy: Let us be friends and rule the earth together in peace: and I will bestow on thee my daughter in marriage, asking from thee nothing in return. And what a gift mine is, thou shalt discover when it comes to thee. For should I describe its value and its qualities in words beforehand, I should seem but a liar in thine eyes. So the envoy went with his message. But the King's daughter, hearing of the matter, privately sent agents of her own, saying nothing to her

father, to find out all they could about her bridegroom, and his affairs.

Then time went by, and the King's envoy was absent so long that the King could hardly keep himself alive for vexation and impatience. But at last, as he sat one day with his daughter beside him, there came in a doorkeeper who fell at his feet, and said: Thy envoy has returned, and now, what are the King's commands? And the King bade her [1] bring him in, without losing a moment. So the envoy came in, just as he was, dusty and travel-stained, and stood before him. And the King looked at him with red eyes, and said: What shall be done to the envoy who lingers on the King's errand, till his black hairs turn to grey, and the grey to white?

Then the envoy joined his hands, and said: O King, let thy anger fall, but not on the innocent. For as for me, I went and came, swifter than a traveller in the rainy season returning to the caresses of his bride. All the delay was caused by the madness of this son-in-law of thine that is to be, or not, according to thy pleasure. For some time ago it happened, that returning from his army, which he had led away in person to subdue a vassal that had revolted, he entered

[1] The doorkeeper (*pratihárí*) seems to have been, in old Hindoo courts, a woman; as were sometimes even the guards.

his apartments, when nobody expected him, and saw his queen, for he had only one,[1] conversing with a man, whom she had conveyed into the palace in the clothes of a woman. And instantly there came over him a horror of the world and its delusions, but above all of women, so great, that, after banishing his queen, for he would not put her to death, he turned his back upon his royal estate, and cast off his kingly pleasures, as a snake discards its old skin. And he went and shut himself up in a deserted temple of Maheshwara, that stands in a wood, outside his capital, on the edge of a sacred lotus pool. And there he lives like an ascetic, cutting himself off from the conversation of men, so that even his ministers can scarcely see him on important business of State. And it was long before I could even manage to advise him of my coming, and your proposal. But at last, he sent for me, having learned of my presence through his prime minister. So they led me to the temple in the early morning. And as I stood waiting before it, suddenly I saw the lotuses of the pool opening, one after another, at the touch of the early sun; and at the same instant, the young King came out before the temple, and stood on the steps

[1] A proof of great and unusual delicacy or self-control in an Eastern potentate.

leading down into the pool. And he looked like a great ruby, for the sun's rays lit up the red bark garments in which he was dressed and edged them with a fringe of flame: and I was amazed at the sight of him, for he seemed like a King even among Kings. And he said to me, in deep tones[1]: Go back to thy master, and tell him that for the good of my kingdom and his own, I will accept his offer: and there shall be peace and friendship between us, and union cemented by the gift of his daughter: whom I will treat royally, and as becomes a queen. But not as a wife: for after we have perambulated the fire together, let her live in her own palace, and forget that I am alive.

But when the envoy had got so far in his tale, the King exclaimed in anger: What! does he dare to make such terms, and send such an answer, and dishonour me and my daughter by such a proposal? Then hearing him speak, his daughter, sitting beside him, began to laugh. And she said: O my father, how is it, that with such grey hairs, thou understandest nothing, neither of men, nor of women, nor of policy, nor of me? Then the King said: My daughter, what are these words? And what dost *thou* understand of men or of

[1] According to the Hindoos, a deep-toned (*gambhîra*) voice is a special note of manliness and wisdom.

policy, or even of women and thyself, who art but fifteen [1] years old? Then his daughter said: Here, in this matter, all has gone well, and turned out according to thy wish; and yet thou art ready to throw away all the advantages to thy realm, by rejecting the proposal of my husband, which is as it should be. Then the King said: How is it well, and not rather very ill? and how shall such a husband obtain thee, who proposes not to treat thee as his wife? and what is this absurdity that thou speakest?

Then his daughter got up and stood before him. And she clapped her hands together, till her bangles rang, and stamped her little foot on the ground, till it left a red print upon the inlaid floor,[2] and her anklets clashed; and her mouth curled like Kama's bow, as if to discharge the scornful arrows of her words. And she exclaimed: Didst thou understand policy, thou wouldst not abandon an advantageous alliance from anger springing out of personal considerations: didst thou understand men, thou wouldst have perceived, from the answer of my husband, that he is, as the envoy has said, an elephant among men,

[1] Women are women very early in the East. But the number fifteen had formerly a significance analogous to that of our own "sweet sixteen," as is well observed by A. V. W. Jackson of the old Iranians. (*Avesta Reader*, p. 44.)

[2] Because her feet were reddened with lac.

and worthy of thee and me: didst thou understand women, thou wouldst know, that he who has never tasted their nectar, may pass even his whole life without ever knowing its sweetness, but that he who has tasted it once, will taste it again, though gods and demons should stand in his way to prevent him: and didst thou understand me, thou wouldst know that I will have this husband, and he shall have me, on any conditions whatever; and like a snake-charmer, I will soothe him and wile him by my jugglery and the cunning of my voice till he will dance [1] as I please. Out on her who cannot cajole her own husband! Then said the King: Daughter, doubtless thou art a very pundit, and thy pretty head is full of the sciences, though how they got there at thy age, only the Creator can tell: none the less thou art still very young; and in this matter of husbands, and their management and cajolery, thou hast still to learn grammar.[2] Then his daughter laughed. And she exclaimed: O my father, art thou really my father? Dost thou think that the craft of a woman in the art which is her own comes to her by age and experience,

[1] The cobra sits up, dances, and bows its head, when the juggler plays to it.

[2] Grammar was called, by the old Hindoos, the *door* of all the sciences; and they studied it sometimes for years and often all their life long.

which on the contrary rather take it away? Did the Creator teach the spider to make webs, and the bee to make honey, and the lotus to bloom? and did he give its wisdom to the elephant, and yet leave woman devoid of the skill proper to her nature? Know, that I will take this burden off thy shoulders and lay it on my own, and bring the matter to a successful issue, for thee, and also for my husband, and for myself. Send thy envoy, and accept his proposal. And send me also to him, as quickly as possible: and in the meanwhile, I will send him, by the mouth of thy envoy, a message on my own account.

So the King yielded to her, for by reason of his own stupidity and his affection for her, he could not oppose her. And he sent accordingly a message to his son-in-law, saying: I have accepted thy terms and am sending thee my daughter with her retinue together with the new moon. And I wish thee good fortune, and a change of disposition. And when the envoy was about to depart, the King's daughter said to him: Say to my husband these words, and beware lest thou add to them or take away one: *Thy female slave is coming to thee with the new moon, and has noted all her lord's commands. And the time of her arrival he shall learn by the mouth of a mediator: but his eye shall not be offended by her presence, nor his*

ear by her conversation, till he shall ask for it of his own accord.

So the envoy went, and carried to the young King the message of his father-in-law, and of his future queen. But when the young King heard her message, he said to himself: Her words are soft, and cunning, and like butter to the ear; but she is a woman: let not even her shadow come near me. And he remained in the deserted temple, which resembled the ruin of his own life, expecting and yet shunning the arrival of his queen.

Then after a while came the last day of the dark fortnight, and the eve of the new moon [1]; and with it came the King's daughter, with her retinue. And she pitched her camp outside the city, close to the wood in which stood the deserted temple, where the King, her husband, had fixed his abode.

[1] An important day among the Hindoos, with a name of its own (*amáwasí*).

The Wax of a New Moon

MANGO

THEN in the early morning, on the first day of the light fortnight, the young King arose before the sun, and went out of the temple, and wandered on the steps that went down into the pool, in which all the lotuses were preparing to welcome their lover, as he rose from behind the eastern mountain. And as he looked through the trees, suddenly he saw coming towards him with twinkling feet along the edge of the pool, a *chétí*,[1] resembling an incarnation of the night of new moon, for like it, she was clothed in dark blue, and she carried in her hand a mango blossom, as it carries the digit of the moon. And while the King turned from her, with aversion and surprise, she came up, and stood a little way off, and said: O King, my mistress has arrived, and sends me to advise you, according to her promise; craving forgiveness for that her messenger is perforce a

[1] In all Hindoo love stories, the *chétí* or *sakhí*, a handmaiden, or female confidante, is a *sine quâ non*. All messages, all business, and even all conversation, is transacted through her, for the heroine never even speaks for herself, but requires a mouthpiece: being prevented from speaking by bashfulness, timidity, custom, and her own agitation.

woman, since her confidante cannot be a man. And she sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, this flower, and if his slumbers have been sweet, it is well with her.

Then the King said: *Chétí*, take my acknowledgment to thy mistress, for her message and her flower: and tell her that sleep is for those only, who like herself have had no dealings with the world; but for a sick man, the only remedy for a night without slumber is dawn. Then the *chétí* said: Thou art deceived: there are other and better remedies. I know both thy disease and its cure. And the King looked at her in surprise, and said: Damsel, thou art too forward, after the manner of thy kind, and thy sex. Then said the *chétí:* Ha! King: dost thou really know anything of my sex, and yet hast thou made a prisoner of thyself in this lonely old temple, grieving over so insignificant and inevitable a thing as the fickleness of a woman? Know, that once there was a King, like thyself, young and inexperienced in the ways of the world, who, like thee, had a wife that he loved: but she died. And like thee, he abandoned the world, with its business and its pleasures, and went and lived by himself, as thou dost, in just such another old temple in a wood as this, devouring his own heart in despair. And when no one could persuade him

to return to life and his kingly duties, at last there came to see him, not a young and frivolous maid like myself, but a wrinkled old *rishi*, the spiritual preceptor of his family. And he came to the King, who was clothed as thou art in garments of bark, and stood beside him, without uttering a word. So as they stood silently together, suddenly there fell to the ground the withered leaf of a bamboo tree, just as yonder yellow leaf is now fluttering down into the still water of the pool. And instantly, seeing the leaf fall, that old preceptor raised a howl of sorrow. And throwing himself upon the ground, he tore his clothes and his hair, and poured dust over his head with both hands. Then the King said: Father, what is this sudden access of sorrow? The preceptor said: Woe! woe! didst thou not mark the leaf fall from the tree? And the King wondered, and said: Holy man, surely thou art overtaken by folly. Is thy extraordinary grief suited to the fall of a leaf from a tree? Then said the old *rishi:* O King, thine is the folly. Dost thou accuse me of folly, in bewailing the fall of a leaf, who forsakest life for the death of a woman, a thing in all respects exactly the same? For what is the death of a mortal woman, but the fall of a leaf from the tree of humanity? [1] And what,

[1] *Οἵη περ φύλλων γενέη, τοίηδε καὶ ἀνδρων.*

O King, is thy folly in forsaking all for the sake of the fickleness of a woman? Are not women by nature more fickle than the very leaves of the bamboo? And wilt thou plunge into the sea of infinite sorrow, because, after its kind, the bamboo leaf has fluttered into the pool?

Then she laid at his feet the mango flower, and turned, and went away quickly through the wood, and vanished among its trees. But the King stood in astonishment, looking after her as she went. And his eyes, as if rebels to his will, reflected in spite of him the grace of her figure, bending and swaying like a swan gliding over a pool. Then he stooped down, and picked up the flower, and smelled it. And he said: Mango, very sweet is thy smell, and musical was the voice of this audacious damsel, arguing for her mistress: but she is a woman, and well she said, convicting herself, that those of her sex are all light and frivolous and flickering as the leaves of yonder bamboo that float on the passing breeze. Shall I allow virtue to women, who disallow it even in themselves? And he threw the flower from him into the pool, and went back into the temple with a ruffled heart, to mourn through the day, till the coming of night.

PÁTALÍ

Then he tossed all night on his bed of leaves, and rose before the sun, and went out and stood on the steps of the pool, watching the images of the last stars paling in the mirror of its water before the advent of the day. And he looked and lo! out of the trees again the *chétí* came towards him with twinkling feet, holding a trumpet-flower [1] in her hand. And she resembled the sky before the dawn, touched with the first streak of red. So she came up to the King, and stood near him, and said: O King, my mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, a flower, and if his slumber has been sound, it is well with her.

Then the King said: *Chétí*, how can he pass untroubled nights, whose memory is haunted by the injuries of a sex, even in thy opinion more frivolous than dry leaves? Then the *chétí* laughed. And she said: O King, I am young, yet am I older than thou art. Dost thou think so lightly of the actions of women, and yet recollect and attach weight to the words of one of the youngest of them? And the King was confused. And he said: Maiden, young certainly thou art, and yet already full of the delusive cunning of thy sex. And if such is the maid, what else can the

[1] *Pátalí*. Its colour is pale red.

mistress be? Then the *chétí* was delighted. And she exclaimed: She is a woman; is not that enough for thee? Are they not all without exception like bamboo leaves, frivolous, and like their stalks, hollow? And yet, judge not all flowers according to thy experience of the weed. For though I and others are but weeds, yet is my mistress like this glorious trumpet-flower. O King, art thou so simple as to think that the Creator, who in making all flowers equally flowers, nevertheless gave to each its own peculiarity, was so left-handed as to make all women identical? Truly, thou art but a poor judge. For some, like this *pátalí*, are glorious to look at, whereas others, like yesterday's mango, are loaded with fragrance. Like her, whose husband once went upon a journey and never returned. And year followed year, and still he never came. And every day in all those years she was pestered by suitors, that, attracted like bees by her beauty, came on ever more keenly the more she drove them away. Then one night she took a lamp and filled it with oil, and a wick, and went down to the bank of Ganges, saying to herself: I will light it, and set it afloat upon the river. And the flame is the life of my husband. Therefore if it goes out, or sinks, I will put also an end to my life, since he will be dead. But if it floats, I will

wait and endure, for I shall know that he will return. So she did. Now that night there was a high wind, which blew furiously; and the waves of Ganges were like those of the sea. But notwithstanding, she lit her lamp, and pushed it out upon the river: for her faith [1] was very strong. And at that moment the Sky, with all its myriad stars for eyes, was looking down at her. And when it saw her little lamp, it laughed in scorn, and said: See what a miserable taper yonder poor mortal woman calls a lamp! But Maheshwara heard the brag. And suddenly, by his power, he created a calm. Then the waves of Ganges sank to sleep, and on her [2] still bosom floated the little lamp, with a flame that never wavered: and in the silent mirror of her waters appeared another sky and other stars, in mimicry of those above. Then said the kindly God: Sky, seest thou yonder sky with all its stars below? And the Sky answered: Aye: but that sky with its stars is but an illusion. And Maheshwara laughed. And he said: Thou foolish Sky, know, that thou art thyself, with all thy stars, no less an

[1] The reader unacquainted with Hindoo literature may possibly see in this a Christian idea; but it is not so: or rather it is far more Indian than Christian: and the original *bhakti* is stronger and far more intense in its meaning than our *faith*.

[2] Because *Gangá* is a woman.

illusion than is that other sky below. The sole reality of all is yonder little lamp, that floats midway, poised between the infinity above and that below. For it embodies the good quality [1] of a faithful wife.

So the lamp floated on, till it went out of sight; and thereafter that woman regained her husband, by the favour of the God.

Then the *chétí* looked at the King steadily, and laid the flower at his feet, and went away. And the King looked after her as she went: and stood meditating long after she was gone. And then he stooped and picked up the trumpet-flower. And he said: *Pátalí*, exquisitely lovely is thy great crimson flower: and as for this strange maiden, surely Saraswati [2] dwells upon her tongue But what of that? Is she not a woman? One of those who carry poison in their teeth under the honey in their lips. And he threw the flower, with his lips shut, into the pool, and went back to the temple with a sad heart, to mourn through the day and await the coming of the night.

[1] Goodness, or *sattwa* (the noun, of which *satí*, a word familiar to all English readers in connection with widow burning, is the adjective) is one of the three great Qualities: *Passion* and *Darkness* being the other two. *Sattwa* alone is real: that which *is* (*sat*). But the play on *wife* and *goodness* cannot be rendered in English.

[2] The goddess of eloquence.

JASMINE.

Then he tossed all night on his bed of leaves, and in the morning rose, and went out upon the steps, just as the young sun was flooding with gold the blue floor of the eastern sky. And as he stood watching, suddenly the *chétí* came again towards him with twinkling feet, holding a jasmine [1] blossom in her hand. And as he looked at her, the King was pleased, against his will: for she resembled in her movements an incarnation of the sap of the tree of youth. And she came up to the King, and looked at him with a smile, and said: O King, my mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, a flower, and if he has slumbered well during the night, it is also well with her.

Then the King smiled himself, and was angry that he did so. And he said: *Chétí*, how can he enjoy repose, that is compelled, against his will, to deal with such a sex as thine? For whether they are good or bad, either way they ruffle and destroy his peace of mind.

Then the *chétí* laughed. And she looked at the King with the laughter hanging in her subtle eyes: and said: O King, thou art gaining wisdom, by associating with those only that can teach it: for even I am not utterly devoid of the natural

[1] *Málatí.*

cleverness of my sex, though I am only just fifteen. And now I see that thy opinion of us all is beginning to waver: since to-day thou art willing to allow in some of us were it only the possibility of good. And I wonder by what cause this sudden change can have been produced. And hearing her, the King was annoyed: for he had determined, that he would not take pleasure in conversing with her: and yet he could not help it. And he said: Of that which has not happened, there is no cause: and my opinions are to-day just what they were before, and so am I. But the *chétí* looked at him with a smile. And she said: Nay, it is not so: the outward signs are unmistakable. I can read them on thee as if what is written there were only my own name. Then the King fell into the trap. And he said: And what, then, is thy name? The *chétí* said: I am called Madhupamanjarí.[1] And the King said: Thou art well named. Then she said: How canst thou tell? Dost thou know what I am like? Wilt thou judge the inside by the outside? Canst thou infer its delicious content from the rough and horrid jacket of the nut? Then the King smiled. And he said: Maiden, thy simile is not appropriate. What resemblance is there

[1] *I. e.*, "a cluster of blossoms for the honey drinkers," the bees. (The fourth syllable rhymes with "gun.")

between the exterior of an ugly nut and thine? Then the *chétí* clapped her hands. And she exclaimed: O King, wilt thou never learn discretion? Hast thou so soon forgotten? Dost thou not know by experience that an outside, let it be never so sweet, may contain but a bitter juice within? Little canst thou estimate from my outside, what qualities there are within. And yet know, that if my mistress loves me better than all her other maids, it is not for my husk, but for my kernel. For I learned wisdom from a cunning master, and what I could teach thee, thou wouldst give much to know. And I could tell thee stories that would make thee laugh at all thy trouble, and take thee to a land of which thou hast never even dreamed: where the trees have ever blossoms, and are noisy with the humming of intoxicated bees: where by day the suns are never burning, and by night the moonstones ooze with nectar in the rays of the camphor-laden moon: where the blue lakes are filled with rows of silver swans, and where, on steps of lapis-lazuli, the peacocks dance in agitation at the murmur of the thunder in the hills: where the lightning flashes without harming, to light the way to women, stealing in the darkness to meetings with their lovers, and the rainbow hangs for ever like an opal on the dark blue curtain of the clouds:

where, on the moonlit roofs of crystal palaces, pairs of lovers laugh at the reflection of each other's lovesick faces in goblets of red wine: breathing as they drink air heavy with the fragrance of the sandal, wafted on the breezes from the mountain of the south: where they play and pelt each other with emeralds and rubies, fetched at the churning of the ocean from the bottom of the sea: where rivers, whose sands are always golden, flow slowly past long lines of silent cranes that hunt for silver fishes in the rushes on their banks: where men are true, and maidens love for ever, and the lotus never fades.

And as he listened, tears started from the eyes of the King. And he exclaimed: Aye! maiden, take me, if thou canst, to the land where love grows never old. But the *chétí* looked at him with kind eyes. And she laid the jasmine blossom at his feet, and turned, and went away quickly through the trees: while the King watched her till she vanished from his sight. And then he stooped and picked up the jasmine flower. And he said: *Málatí*, thy fragrance is sweet beyond comparison, and yet it is not so delicious as the music of this little maiden's voice. And yet alas! she is a woman. Out, out upon these women! For I thought I had succeeded in uprooting the very seeds of their attraction from my heart: and

now there comes this pretty *chéti* and destroys all my operations with a few honied words breathed through the door of her cunning scented lips. Then he looked at the flower and the pool. And he said: Flower, I will not throw thee away till thou art faded, for that would be a shame. And he went back to the temple, with the flower in his hand, divided in his mind between the recollection of the *chéti* and the recollection of his grief.

A FLOWERLESS DAWN.

Then he tossed all night upon his bed of leaves, and in the morning he rose, and went out upon the steps, and stood on the edge of the pool, listening to the birds in the trees beginning to awake, and to salute by their songs the advent of the lord of the day. And as he stood, he looked along the edge of the pool, and through the trees, but he saw no *chéti* coming towards him, and he remained alone with the pool and its lotuses and the trees.

Then after a while he said to himself: Doubtless she has fallen asleep, or risen late, or it may be that her mistress required her services: or possibly she could not find a flower. But the day grew older, and still she did not come. And at last, he said to himself: What is it to me, whether she

comes or does not come? Are not these trees, and this pool, still what they were before she came into the wood? and can I not pass my day with them for my companions, as I did before? So he wandered up and down on the edge of the pool. But no matter what he did, his eyes, as if in spite of him, kept looking to the quarter from which she was accustomed to appear.

And then at last, he said to himself: Something is surely wanting, this morning, to the beauty of this wood: and yet it is very strange. For here are the trees, and the temple, and the pool with its lotuses, and the dawn: and nothing is other than it was, save that the *chéti* and her flower have not come. Nothing is gone, but a woman and a flower. And can it be, that their absence alone should make such a difference to the wood? Then he sat down on the steps, and gazed into the pool. And he said: Aye! but the flower was very sweet. And the woman? Nay! she is not a woman, but a child. And yet again, no, rather is she poised, like dusk, and like dawn, on the boundary of two conditions, sharing the beauty and qualities of both, and yet possessing a third belonging to neither. For she is half a child and half a woman, and she resembles those flowers that she carries in her hand, buds newly opened in the dawn. And like them, she carries with her a fragrance

of her own, yet in this she is superior, that she possesses motion and a voice: while they are silent, and rooted to the ground. And the sight of her coming towards me in the morning with nimble feet that seem as if they were rejoicing, wrapped in her dark blue mantle that like the mist upon a mountain only renders more beautiful the outline of that which it ineffectually conceals, lingers in the recesses of my eye, and refuses to disappear: and like one that has loitered on the hills in the season of the rains, the noise of the murmur of her voice hangs like that of water in my ear, and mixes with the silence of the wood. Oh! there is magic in the music of her voice, for it is low, and sweeter than honey,[1] and carries in it whispers that snare and take prisoner the listening soul, and distract it from attending to the meaning of her words. And even now, it rustles in my memory like a breeze in the branches of a young bamboo, which sigh and ring with its echo, even after it is gone. For, alas! it is gone, and now I must wait till to-morrow before it comes again. And yet, who knows? for something may prevent her from returning, and to-morrow again she may be absent, just as she was to-day. And he spent that day in wandering about, dissatisfied, and

[1] Kalidas, who was a judge in these matters, resembled Shakespeare in his love for the low and gentle voice (*walguwák*).

hoping for the morrow, and yet fearing, lest even then she should not reappear.

CHAMPAK.

Then all night long, he tossed on his bed of leaves, and in the morning he arose very early, long before the sun, and went out upon the steps, and stood waiting. And he looked up, and saw in the air high above him a row of swans, flying swiftly to the north, with bodies that gleamed ruddy in the beams of the day-star still hidden behind the eastern mountain. And then at last the sun rose, and at that moment he looked, and saw the *chéti* once more coming rapidly towards him. And she seemed in his eyes like an incarnation of the dew of the morning, and like an emblem of the love that was rising from its ashes in his own heart, embodied in a feminine form. And she carried in her hand a champak flower; and she came up to the King, perfuming the air, and said: O King, my mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, a flower, and if he has enjoyed good repose, it is well with her.

Then the King said: Dear *chéti*, how can he enjoy repose, whose friends desert him? And she said: O King, if his friends abandon him, the fault is his own, who had not discrimination suffi-

cient to discern the false from the true. And the King sighed. And he said: Alas! it is hard to tell. And they are few who in this world of illusion can detect and distinguish between the good and the bad. For baseness assumes innumerable disguises, and can present itself even under a form like thine. Then she said with a smile: O King, be not too sure in my case. And the King said: I am sure of nothing but this: that life is worthless when love is gone. And she said: That cannot go, which was never present, and love cannot have left thee, which thou hast never known. And the King said in astonishment: And dost thou know anything of love, that art but a child? Then she looked at him awhile in silence. And then she said: O King, this is a matter neither of youth nor age, but of inheritance and recollection. For as a rule, men learn only by experience, and get it only when their hair is grey. But there are some whose memories are very strong, and they carry with them knowledge that never leaves them, from one birth to the next; and are wise, by reason of the influences [1] that come down to them

[1] Nothing is more universally distributed throughout Hindoo literature than this idea of the overpowering influences of transmitted reminiscences and consequences from previous births. It is only a profound truth in a mythological form.

out of the oblivion of the past. And of these know that I am one. And what though I am, as thou sayest, but a child: yet in such a case as this, a child may be wiser than a king: and it may be that I am wiser even than thou art. For I worshipped in a former birth the God of the flowery-bow, and learned from his favour secrets, which have bequeathed to me impressions even in this birth. And now I will tell thee a little of what thou dost not know. Love is a triple cord.[1] And when all three strands are firmly bound together, then nothing can break or end it, not even death. But if any of the three be taken by itself, then it snaps under the pressure of the circumstances and trials of life. And thus it was with thee. In thy case, the three were not combined: and thy love was a unison and not a harmony. And the King said: And what, then, are the three? Then she said: Three kinds of love must meet together, to make up that which is perfect and complete: that of the body, and that of the intellect, and that of the soul. And thus it can exist, only between a woman and a man. For each sex cares only for the beauty of the other, and is unconscious of its own: and unless

[1] There is a play on words here which cannot be translated, for *guna* means not only a *cord* or *string*, but also a moral *quality* or *virtue:* and yet again, a *power* or *multiple.*

there is a difference of sex, there is no bodily attraction, and thus one element is wanting. And she, that is to retain her lover's love for ever, must possess, first, a body without a flaw, or his senses will stray from her to other bodies; for it is their nature to seek their proper object: and secondly, intelligence, or his esteem will depart elsewhere: and thirdly, goodness, or his soul will abandon her, in the search for that without which it cannot do, and without which the other two component parts are worthless, except for a time. And as it is with the woman, so is it for the man, with this difference, that their bodies and their intelligences and their souls are totally unlike. For that which is virtue in a woman, may be its opposite in a man, and his weakness may be her strength, and even her ornament. But thou wert foolish in not wisely choosing the proper object of thy love. For doubtless she was beautiful, but that was all: and now it was surely a good for thee, and no harm, that she betrayed thee when she did. For though thou didst receive at the moment a wound sharper than a sword; yet time, and it may be, circumstance, will heal it: and certainly time would have shown thee in her case that elements were wanting to the perfection of thy love, and it would not have endured. And now thou art free, and

punished for thy error, and wiser: and it befits thee rather to rejoice than mourn. For who knows what awaits him in the future? and who can expect to achieve the highest good [1] who does not know what it is like? And thou wilt find, no doubt, the perfect trinity of love with my mistress, for I would hope that she is worthy of thee.

And as she spoke, the King stood spell-bound. But as she ended, he started and exclaimed: Away! speak not of thy mistress, for she is a matter of policy and statecraft: tell me only of thyself: for surely thou art furnished with cords [2] strong enough to make the love of thee immortal, and bind thy lover to thee with a knot that will never break. But the *chétí* put her finger on her lip. And she shook her pretty head at the King, and said: Hush! speak not thus to me, or I shall not come again. And she looked at him with a smile, and laid the flower at his feet, and turned and went away. But just before she disappeared, she turned round, and looked at the King, and then she entered the trees and vanished from his eyes.

And the King stooped and picked up the flower, and put it to his lips. And he sighed, and said: Champak, thy odour is like the very

[1] *purushárta*—"the goal of man."
[2] Here again *cords* = *virtues*.

essence of the fragrance of love, and well is it suited to the words of this irresistible maiden, who resembles that self-same essence incarnated by the will of the Creator, in a wholly different, yet equally delicious form. And he went back to the temple with the flower in his hand, buried in meditation on the words of Madhupamanjarí and utterly oblivious of all else. For her beauty, like a cunning painter effacing one picture to make room for another, had obliterated every stain left by gloomy recollections on the surface of his soul.

LOTUS.

Then all night long, he slept profoundly on his bed of leaves, and rose only when the sun had arisen. And when he went out, he found the *chétí* standing waiting for him on the edge of the pool, with a red lotus in her hand. And she seemed in his eyes like the peace of his own mind embodied in a visible form. And as he went towards her, she looked up, and said: My mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, a flower, and if his slumbers have been sweet, it is well with her.

Then the King said: Dear *chétí*, he sleeps well who regains his tranquillity: and by thy favour

I have slept this night as I have not slept for many. And she said: Whence has come this new tranquillity? And the King laughed, and said: A skilful physician administered to me yesterday a drowsy drug. Then she said: They are fortunate, who possess skilful physicians, for they are few. Then he said: The drug that brought me sleep was compounded of the murmur of thy voice and the nectar of the sight of thee. And I begin to hope that a cure may be effected, for formerly I thought my case desperate. Then Madhupamanjarí began to laugh. And she exclaimed: O King, beware! Was it not but a day or two ago that thou wast bringing charges of variability against the whole race of woman? And now art thou not becoming amenable to the same charge? Then the King said: Thou malicious *chétí*, thou knowest well that thou art saying what is not the truth, solely to torment me. Then she said: Nay, but thou appearest to me closely to resemble the fisherman, who lived formerly, in another age and country, by catching fish. And one day he threw his net into the sea, and there came up in it a beautiful fish of gold. Then he drew it up, filled with joy. But just as he was going to take it into his hand, it jumped back into the sea. Then he shed tears of despair, and abandoning the sea, was ready to abandon the

body. And he exclaimed: Alas! my life is over, for it was wrapped up in that fish of gold. Nevertheless, after a while, he went back to the sea, and threw in his net again: and there came up a fish of silver. And instantly he forgot his fish of gold, and eagerly stretched out his hand to take the fish of silver. But that also slid from his hand into the sea. And again he gave himself up to despair, and quitted the shore, and spent his time in bewailing his loss. Yet after awhile, he came back again to the sea. And he threw in his net, and lo! there came up a common fish, made of the ordinary flesh of fish; and he took it in his hand and carried it away, and was perfectly happy, and he utterly forgot the fish of gold, and the fish of silver, as if they had never been.

Then the King said: Dear *chétí*, I would be angry with thee, if I could, for thy roguery in comparing me to such a vile fisherman. And she said: O King, beware! lest the parallel should turn out to be exact. Then the King said: Thou mayst liken me rather to a fire which was all but extinguished, and could not be rekindled, disdaining as it did every species of common fuel, till they offered it a piece of heavenly sandal, of which even that that grows on Malaya is but a poor copy. And then it blazed up from its ashes

with a pure flame, such as it had never put forth before.

Then she said: King, it is time for me to go. And she laid the lotus at his feet, and went away; but she turned and looked back at him, before she disappeared among the trees. And the King picked up the lotus, and said: Lotus, said I well, that I was fire, and she the fuel? Or is it not rather I that am the fuel, and she that is the fire? For certainly she burns me like a flame, even more, now that she is absent, than when she was here. Therefore, O thou red lotus, I will carry thee about all day, since thou resemblest a piece of herself that she has left behind, to cool me in the hot noon of her absence like a lump of snow. And he went back to the temple, with the lotus in his hand, feeding on the future, and forgetful of the past.

SHRÍPHALA.

Then he dreamed of Madhupamanjarí, all night long, and in the morning he rose before the sun, and went out. And as he stood listening to the joyous cries of the *chakrawáka* and his mate, meeting in the morning after a night of separation, the *chétí* came towards him through the trees, holding in her hand berries of the *shríphala*. And she

said: My mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, berries, and if he has enjoyed sweet sleep, it is well with her.

Then the King said: Dear *chétí*, I cannot tell whether I slept last night or lay awake: this only I know, that all night I listened to thy voice and gazed at thee: but whether it was a dream or not, I cannot tell. Then she looked at him with mock gravity, and said: These are symptoms very dangerous and alarming to the physician. Thy case is parlous, and very similar to that of the madman who was enamoured of a stone. Then he said: Pretty *chétí*, I see no resemblance whatever between a stone and thee. And she said: I can be to thee no more than a stone was to him. And the King said: Tell me his story, for I care not whether it be like my own, or not: and in the meantime I will watch thee, and listen to thy voice. Then she said: Know that there was a king, who hunting in the forest came to an ancient temple, and on its wall was a stone image of the goddess of beauty. And the instant his eye fell on it, he fell in love with it so violently that he could not tear himself away from it. Then sending for workmen, he caused them to extract the image from the wall; and carrying it away with him, he had it set up in a room in his palace. And night and day he lived before it, never taking

his eyes off it: and he used to kiss it, and caress it, and upbraid it for not returning his caresses. And one night, as he lay asleep, he thought he saw the goddess come down to him out of the wall, no longer made of stone, but warm and living flesh and blood. But just as he was going to clasp her in his arms, almost beside himself for joy, suddenly a watchman in the street shouted and awoke him. Then in his fury, the king instantly put the watchman to death, and banished every watchman in the city. And he spent the remainder of his life vainly trying to recover in his dreams the conclusion of his meeting with the goddess, and yet he never could succeed: and he was filled with contempt for everything that happened when he was awake, saying to himself: This whole world is like the stone, a mere lifeless copy of that real original which I found that time, by the favour of the deity, in my dream. And surely he is mad, who pursues all his life a thing inaccessible to him even in a dream: and such am I to thee; and thou wilt surely resemble him, if forgetting my mistress, thou allowest thy fancy to fix on an object forbidden to thee. O King, is it not true, and is not the comparison exact?

Then the King said: I do not know: I have not heard thy tale; for I was wholly occupied in

watching thy lips, and I marvel that I never noticed them before. Tell me again, and I will shut my eyes; so that thy beauty shall not interfere, and keep me from comprehending the meaning of thy words. And she laughed, and said: Surely I am right, and thy wits are deserting thee. And she laid the berries at his feet, and went away, without looking back, and was lost among the trees. But the King stooped, and picked up the berries. And he said: Berries, ye are well named.[1] Did ye acquire merit in a former birth, that ye were privileged to be plucked from the tree and carried in her hand, while your brothers and sisters were left disconsolate and unhappy on the tree? And he went back to the temple, holding them in his hand, haunted by the memory of her lips, whose colour they resembled, to wait for another dawn.

SHIRÍSHA.

And they hovered before him as he slept all night on his bed of leaves, and in the morning he rose before the sun, and went out and stood on the brink of the pool. And as he gazed at its surface, which was dotted with lotuses like a panther's

[1] *Shríphala;* i.e., the fruit of the goddess of beauty and good fortune.

skin, there entered into his heart a doubt, like the shadow of the bats that were taking their last flight over the water before the dawn. And he said to himself: O, she is beautiful, but alas! she is a woman: have I done well in allowing her to steal entrance like these bats, into my heart? And that instant, he saw her coming towards him, with a *shirísha* flower in her hand. And she came to him, and said: My mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, a flower, and if he has enjoyed sweet slumbers, it is well with her.

And the King looked for a moment at the smile that sat like sunlight on her lips; and he said with a sigh: Dear *chéti*, how can he sleep well, who doubts and fears? For I am about to put out again upon the sea, on which I have already made shipwreck. Blue, blue is the sea, and soft and calm its waves, and smiling, and yet so it was before, when it betrayed me. And shall I trust my little bark on it again? Then she looked at him awhile, with sorrow and reproach in her eyes. And she said: Doomed is the double mind, and he that cannot venture, for want of courage or of trust, can never win return. Not for him the treasures that lurk in the bosom of the sea, where monsters roam, and jewels lie, and sea nymphs dwell. For once upon a time, there was a merchant's son who set out in a ship to go on

a trading journey to a distant land. And he sailed for many a *yojana* over the billowy waves, till at length he came to the very middle of the sea. Then suddenly the wind fell, and the sails hung idle on the yards, and the ship stopped. And out of the green and heaving sea there rose before him a tree of coral; and on a branch of that tree there sat a maiden of the sea: and the foam of the sea dripped from her limbs, and sat like pearls upon her breasts, and fell like cream into the water, and her long hair lay on the waves that surged beneath her like her own breast. And she called to the merchant's son: Jump into the sea, and come and live with me, and I will give thee jewels such as no merchant ever saw, and surfeit thee with pleasures such as never mortal tasted yet. Then that coward merchant's soul was balanced between his longing for that heavenly maiden and his fear of the waves. And he looked and longed to jump, but did not dare. And then in a moment that fair tree and its lovely burden sank back into the sea and disappeared, and he was left alone, with the water and the sky. Then he continued his journey, filled with unavailing regret, and presently there arose a storm, and it sank his ship into the sea, and he was drowned. Thus he lost his treasure, and yet for all that did not even save his worthless life from

the very danger that he feared. And, O King, this life is fleeting, and more unstable than the waves of ocean that it resembles. And what does it contain that should make it worth a hero's while to balance for a moment between losing it, and winning what fortune only offers once in any life, and often not at all?

Then she laid the *Shirísha* flower at the King's feet, and turned and went away, slowly, and was lost among the trees. And the King stooped and picked up the flower. And he said: O *Shirísha*, woe to thee, lovely as thou art, for thou art the bringer of unhappiness. Now have I offended my beloved *chétí* by betraying unworthy suspicion. But ah! she is a woman. Why did not Maheshwara lift her out of the category of women, and place her in a species by herself, that I might not remember when I gaze at her imperfections that are inseparable from all her sex but her? And he went back to the temple, with the flower in his hand, angry with himself, and more in love with the *chétí* than before.

KADAMBA.

And he lay all night on his bed of leaves, repenting of his doubts: and in the morning he arose before the sun, and went out, and watched

the eastern sky changing colour like an opal as the night drove away before the dawn: but the *chéti* never came. And as the day grew older, the King grew paler, for he said: Can it be that she means to leave me another day alone? And then at last, when the sun was already high in the heaven, he looked, and saw her coming slowly towards him, with a purple flower of the *Kadamba* in her hand. And she seemed in his eyes like the nectar of reconciliation in feminine form. And she came up to him and said: My mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, a flower, and if his slumbers have been light, it is well with her.

Then the King said: Dear *chéti*, how can he sleep who waits to be forgiven for a sin committed? And she said: What is that? The King said: My bark is launched, and long ago floating on the very middle of the sea. Nothing now is wanting, save the lady of the coral tree, to bid me to jump into the water. Then she looked at him with joy dancing in her eyes: but she said: O King, such maidens are very rare, rarer even than the trees on which they grow. And much I fear that thou hast launched thy little boat in vain, and will have to content thee with a more earthly mistress, such as mine. Then the King said: Tell me not of thy mistress, for I will not listen. Then she said: Nay, but surely

thou art curious to learn at least what she is like. She is far more beautiful than I, and she is tall. Then the King said: If she is taller than thou art, she is too tall. Then she said: Moreover, she is skilled in poetry. And the King said: I love not ladies that are pundits. Then she said: She dances and sings like an Apsaras in Indra's hall. And the King said: I care for the dancing of no feet, save that of thine as they come towards me; and for no music save that of thy voice, which is more delightful in my ear than the murmur of the bees. And as he spoke, a bee, attracted by the flower in her hand, flew to it, and entered it. Then she closed the petals quickly with her hand, and said: O King, I have him here a prisoner, to convict thee of thy madness. Listen, and tell me if thou canst, without deceiving, which is the sweeter, the real bee, or that voice of mine which thou dost liken to its humming? And the King put his ear close to the flower, and heard the bee inside: and he said: I cannot tell. And he fixed his eyes upon her face, and said: Now speak, that I may judge between him and thee. Then she laughed, and let go the flower, and the bee flew away. And the King exclaimed: Alas! the bee is mad, not I. For who would willingly quit a prison compounded of a flower and thy hand, which is itself a flower? Give it me that I may

compare them. But she said: Nay; the flower is thine own, for it was a present from my mistress: but my hand is mine, and now I must return to her. And as she spoke, the bee came again, and buzzed about her head. And she exclaimed in terror: O King, this villain of a bee will sting me. And the King said: Doubtless: he has come to avenge himself for his imprisonment. Then she ran in agitation almost into the King's arms, exclaiming: O King, protect her who comes to thee for refuge.[1] And in his delight, the King exclaimed: O King of bees, come thou to me, and in return for the favour thou hast done me, I will serve thee with honey in lotus cups all day. But in the meanwhile the bee flew away. And Madhupamanjarí started back in confusion, and said: O King, my mistress is brave, and not afraid of bees. Then the King said, with emphasis: Out upon all women, that do not fear bees! But, O Bee Blossom,[2] surely this bee is to be excused, if he mistook thy lips for a flower.

Then she said: O King, this unmannerly bee has disgraced me in thine eyes, and caused me to forget the reserve of a maiden: and now it is time

[1] This is a formula. The special business of kings was like that of the knight in the Middle Ages, to protect the distressed (*sharanágata*).

[2] He plays upon her name: see note, p. 164.

that I were gone. And she laid the flower at the King's feet, and ran away without looking behind her, and vanished in the trees. But the King stooped and picked up the flower. And he said: O glorious flower, I will preserve thee for ever, even after thou art faded: for thou wast the occasion of the onslaught of this incomparable bee, which led my dear *chétí* to forget her caution and take refuge in my arms. O beauty, thou art irresistible above all, because thou art weak! Out, out upon all kings' daughters that are not afraid of bees! And he went back to the temple, kissing the *Kadamba* flower, and intoxicated with delight.

AMARANTH.

And all night, he slept with the *Kadamba* flower on his bed of leaves: and in the morning he went out, and watched the fire-flies on the pool hastening to hide their lamps before they should be shamed by the coming of the Great Lamp of day. And presently the *chétí* came towards him, holding in her hand an amaranth.[1] And she looked like an incarnation of the essence of timidity, blushing at the recollection of the adventure of the day before. And she came up

[1] *Kurabaka:* it has a crimson flower.

to the King, and said: O King, my mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, a flower, and if his slumber has been peaceful, it is well with her.

Then the King said: Dear *chétí*, he sleeps well, who has not to reproach himself with withholding succour from the suppliant. Then she dropped her eyes upon the ground. And the King looked at her with affection, and he said: Dear *chétí*, do not be ashamed: for thy case was perilous. Moreover, I took no advantage of thee in thy distress. But nevertheless, could I discover that bee, I would intoxicate him with nectar till he could not fly. Then she said: And what, if he had stung me? Then the King said: *Chétí*, had the villain stung thee, I would have bound him with cobwebs, and thrown him before an elephant. Then she laughed, and said: Poor bee! the punishment would have exceeded his crime. But enough of him! Let me rather continue to enlighten thee as to the virtues of my mistress. Then the King said hastily: O thou tormentor, wilt thou never cease to remind me of thy mistress? O that I were not a king, to endure by reason of policy queens that I do not want! Or why art thou not thy mistress, and she the maid? For as it is, I see before me nothing but despair. Then she said: O King, despair is unavailing.

And even greater obstacles than these have been surmounted by others, by the favour of Ganesha and their own determination. Did not Wishwamitra by resolution long ago become a Brahman? Then the King said with a sigh: O my dear *chéti*, I am in misery, and instead of consoling me, thou mockest me with old legends that are not to the point. And she said: O King, some surmount obstacles, and some faint and die before shadows, which seem to be but are not really obstacles at all. For once there was a full moon. And looking for lotuses to love, he peered curiously into a forest pool. Now in that pool there was a pure white lotus, growing in the black mud. But that day there had come down to the pool two male elephants; and they fought in the pool, and struck their tusks into each other's sides, and their red blood streamed into the pool, and fell upon the lotus, and turned its petals red. So when the moon looked down into the pool, he exclaimed: Alas! it is only a red lotus, and not a bride for me.[1] So he pined away in sorrow, and night after night he grew thinner and thinner, and at last his emaciation became such that he vanished altogether, and ceased to exist. And then on the dark night that precedes the new moon,

[1] The white lotus (*kumuda*) is the proper moon-lotus, the others are apparently all devoted to the sun.

the clouds assembled in masses; and there fell a furious rain into the pool, and it washed the lotus clean. And when the new moon stole into the pool, lo! he saw to his delight a pure white lotus, with a rain-drop shining on its leaf, like a tear of joy at his approach.[1]

Then the King said: O, that I were that moon, and thou my lotus: then would my nights pass like an instant of delight, and not hang over me, as now they do, black with the hours of separation. But she laid the amaranth at his feet, and went away: and turned, before she vanished in the trees, and then became invisible. And the King stooped, and picked up the flower. And he said: Amaranth, gladly would I stain thee, as those mad elephants did the lotus, with my blood, could it avail: yet even so, I could not make thy colour redder than it is. And he went back to the temple, with the amaranth in his hand, sad at heart, foreseeing the conflict of his honour with his love.

ASHÓKA.

Then all night long, he lay tossing on his bed of leaves. And in the morning he rose before the sun, and went out and stood before the pool, and

[1] The King did not understand her, for love is blind.

watched the parrots screaming in the *ashwattha* tree, with beaks that were tipped with the colour of the dawn: till he saw the *chétí* coming towards him with twinkling feet, holding an *ashóka* flower in her hand. And she seemed in his eyes *like a draught of the nectar of love longing incarnate in a feminine form.*[1] And she came up to the King and said: My mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, a flower, and if his slumbers have been sweet, it is well with her.

Then the King said: Dear *chétí*, can he sleep well, whose night is passed in longing for the morn? Alas! why is it not always dawn? for see, at dawn, how all the lotuses turn golden in the sun, and thou art here. Could not Maheshwara of his omnipotence strike Súrya with his trident, and fix him in the sky, over the eastern mountain: so would the lotuses be always golden, and thou wouldst be always here. Then she said: O King, they come to evil ends who long for the impossible. As, long ago, did he, who coveted the Spinners of the Sun. For once there was a gambler, who having lost everything at play was wandering about the world, and by chance came upon an Apsaras asleep. But as he ran at her, she woke

[1] These are the expressions that are the despair of the translator. So simple, so beautiful, so pithy in the original: so roundabout and clumsy in a language whose genius is altogether different (*múrtámaut-sukyamádanám*).

up, and sprang into the air and vanished: but he caught her by the foot, and she left her golden sandal in his hand. Then she began to wheedle and cajole him, saying: Give me back my sandal, for without it I cannot go to Indra's hall, and to-night I have to dance there without fail. Then he said: I will give it back only if thou wilt carry me to heaven, and let me see thee dancing. So finding no escape, the Apsaras carried him to heaven, hidden in a flower in her ear. And he saw all the Apsarases dancing in golden robes, like a bed of golden lotuses all waving in the wind. Then filled with greed, he said to her, whispering into her ear: Whence come your golden robes? And she said: They are made for us by the Spinners of the Sun, who dwell beyond the eastern mountain. And every night they sit and spin the hair of his old rays into gold, combing it out of his head, after he has washed in the lakes of liquid amethyst that lie hidden in that mountain, where it is always dawn, and never either dusk, or night, or noon. But when the gambler heard her, insatiable desire filled his greedy soul. And he began to shout and bawl: Hey! for the gold: hey! for the Spinners. And Indra said: Who is that making discords in heaven, and throwing out the dancers? So they hunted about, and found him hidden in the flower

in her ear. Then Indra said to Mátali: Turn this rascal out of heaven, and with him the impudent Apsaras who has dared to smuggle him into heaven in her ear. So Mátali threw them out. But the gambler, not being a sky-goer, fell down to earth and was broken to pieces.

So King, beware! lest by coveting the impossible thou shouldst lose thy heaven altogether. And she laid the *ashóka* flower at the King's feet, and turned to go. Then the King said: Alas! dear *chétí*, canst thou not stay longer? And she said: No. Then he said: Then canst thou not come twice or three times in the day? For the days are long, and thou art here but for a moment: and between every two days there is a night. Then she said: O King, covet not the impossible: for where my mistress is, I must be too: and now I have duties to perform. And she went away through the trees, looking back over her shoulder at the King, till she disappeared. Then the King stooped and picked up the flower. And he said: *Ashóka*, thou dost torture me exactly like the provoking *chétí* who conveyed thee: for thy beauty is such, that I cannot bear to throw thee away, and yet thou dost not cease to remind me of my obligation to her mistress. And he went back to the temple, with the *ashóka* in his hand, and the image of Madhupamanjarí in his heart.

PALÁSHA.

And he lay all night, tossing on his bed of leaves: and in the morning, he arose before the sun, and stood sadly, plunged in meditation, like a crane, on the edge of the pool. And he never noticed how the *chétí* came towards him, till he looked up, and saw her standing beside him, with a red *Palásha* flower in her hand. Then she said: O King, my mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, a flower, and if his sleep has been sound, it is well with her.

Then the King said: Dear *chétí*, sleep, like a jealous rival, has taken offence at thy frequent visits to me, and will not come near me. And she said, with a smile: O King, let her not be angry, for soon will my visits cease. Then the King cried out: Ah! say not so: thou hast uttered the very secret of my heart. For I must ere long celebrate this hateful marriage with thy mistress, for to keep her waiting any longer would not be polite. And then, alas! what will become of me and thee? Thy visits will cease, and if thy mistress should suspect me, she might put thee to death. Then the *chétí* said: Nay, not so: for my mistress wishes well, both to thee and to me. And I fear, lest when thou knowest her, it may turn out wholly otherwise; and thou wilt rather

forget the *chéti* for the mistress. Then the King exclaimed: Be the sun my witness that I will not. Rather will I send her back to her father. Let him do what he will: let him take my kingdom, and add it to his own: I care not so that he only leave me this wood and its pool, and thee for its visitor in the morning. And she looked at him with a smile; and said: O King, these are but idle words. And well do I know that thou wilt never send her back. Then the King said: *Chéti*, I will. Then she said: Nay, that were to deceive her, and break thy own word. And deception is base, but fidelity is good. Moreover, she is a deposit [1] in thy hands. And know that once there was a merchant who possessed a great pearl, such that the hand could hardly grasp it: and it resembled a mass of sea-foam, collected into a ball in the light of the moon on an ocean shell, under the constellation *Swáti*. And it was famous throughout the kingdom. Then having to go on a journey, he went to a brother merchant, and gave it to him, saying: This is a deposit with thee, till I return. So he said: Very well: go without fear. And the merchant departed. But the other buried the pearl in the ground. Then the King came to him and said: Give me the

[1] This idea of a "deposit" constantly recurs in Hindoo poetry.

pearl which was deposited with thee, and I will enrich thee: if not, I will take it by force. Then the merchant said: What wilt thou take, to wait for a week: for I love to look at it? The King said: For one crore,[1] I will wait for one week. So the merchant gave him a crore. Then after a week, the King came again, and said: Give me now the pearl. And the merchant bought from him the delay of another week for another crore. And so he did, till after a while his wealth was exhausted, and he was a beggar. Then the King said: Give me now the pearl. Then the merchant said: King, I have a daughter, fairer by far than all thy queens. Take her, and sell me, for her, another week. So the King did. And then he came again: and said: Give me now the pearl. Then the merchant said: Take my life, and sell me for it yet another week; and when that is ended, take the pearl, and promise to put me to death. So the King said: Very well. Then after three days, the owner of the pearl returned. And he came and asked for his pearl: and the other gave it to him, and said: Thou art returned in good time: here is thy deposit; and all is well. And then he went to the King, and said: O King, the owner of the pearl has returned: and I have

[1] About a million sterling, when the rupee was equal to a florin.

restored to him his own: and here I am. Then said the King: Thou art the pearl for whom I have been waiting. And now thou shalt marry my daughter, and recover thy own, as pure as when I took her; for she was thy deposit in my hands: and my kingdom and all my affairs shall be in thine.

Then she laid the flower at the King's feet, and went away. But the King stood and watched her as she went, till she passed out of his sight. And then he stooped and took up the flower. And he said: O flower of the Dhák, thou art a deposit in my hands. How shall I do without her? or how retain her and my honour, for they are incompatible? And he went back to the temple with the flower in his hand, striving to discover some way of escape from the dilemma, but in vain.

SHAMÍ

And he lay all night, tossing on his bed of leaves: and in the morning, he rose before the sun, and went out. And as he stood watching the fish, raising their silver heads from the water to nibble the lotus stalks, he saw the *chétí* coming towards him, with a yellow flower of the *shamí* in her hand: and she resembled the very creeper itself, gifted with the power of motion. Then she

came up to the King, and said: O King, my mistress sends her lord, by these unworthy hands, a flower, and if his slumber has been sweet, it is well with her.

Then the King said: Dear *chétí*, how can he sleep, who sees before him the end of his life? And she said: O King, is thy life so sweet to thee? Surely this very moon was new, when life was yet a thing of no value in thy eyes? Then the King said: Aye! but then I had never seen thy face. And the *chétí* laughed, and said: O King, but am I not a woman? And what are women in thy eyes? Then he said: What thou art, I care not: sure I am, that thou art not a woman. Or if thou art a woman, the Creator has surely formed two species of thy kind: in one, he put all other women; and in the other, thee alone. And she looked at him, with mischief in her eyes. And she said: And in which class did he place my mistress? But the King exclaimed: Out on thee, thou marble-hearted *chétí!* Canst thou not allow me to forget but for a moment, what I remember but too well? Then she said: But, O King, thou dost not well. Wilt thou leave my mistress for ever awaiting thy pleasure in this matter of thy marriage? And the King winced at her words, like a noble horse touched by the whip. And he said: *Chétí*,

poison not the nectar of my dawn. Only too well I know that thou art right, and that my behaviour in this matter is not that of a gentleman.[1] And yet, for this, thou art thyself to blame; and so is she. Could she not have chosen some other than thyself to do her errand? And yet, out on her, if she had! Then should I have missed the very kernel of the fruit of my birth. Alas! whichever way she chose, it was my ruin. Then said the *chétí:* That which is to be is known only to the deity. But thy duty to the Queen is very plain. And the King sighed. And he said: Hard is thy heart, and very fair thy form: sweet is thy voice, and bitter are thy words. To-morrow, I will do thy bidding and my duty, and pay a visit to the Queen, and consult with the astrologers and fix a day for the ceremony. But O! to-day let me see thee and hear thee to the fuíl. Stay with me till the evening, that I may draw from thee strength to nerve me for the morrow.

Then she looked at him awhile, with kindly eyes: and then she said: O King, that which is written on the future by the deity, no man can erase, and no wisdom can avert. For once there was a king, with many queens. And among these, there was one, whose name was Shrí[2]; and

[1] *Anárya:* an exact equivalent. [2] The goddess of beauty.

the name was not appropriate, for she was the least beautiful of all. But she was gentle, and small, and she thought nothing of herself: and the king loved her so passionately, that he would have given his kingdom, and his life, and all the riches of the three worlds, to save one hair from falling from her head. Now it happened, that one day a criminal was apprehended in a crime: and the king gave orders that he should instantly be put to death: and it was done. Then after a while, the priests came to him and said: O King, this man, that thy order put to death, was a Brahman [1]; and the gods are angry. And now, thy life and thy kingdom are in jeopardy: and unless they are appeased with a sacrifice, the gods will destroy us all. Then the king said: What sacrifice is necessary? And they said: That of the queen that loves thee, and that thou lovest, best. Then terror came into the king's heart. And he lied, and said: She of all my queens that loves me, and that I love, best, is Priyadarshiní: and alas! she is the most beautiful of all. So

[1] The most frightful penalties are laid, in Manu, upon those who slew Brahmans: under no circumstances whatever could the King put them to death. (It is a total misapprehension to ascribe these, and similar regulations, as is so often done, to the cunning and policy of the Brahmans They were the repository of the religious welfare of the State, and they shared the superstition which made the killing of them a crime.) See, *e. g.*, Moore's *Pantheon*, p. 373.

they said: Very well. To-morrow morning, the sacrifice shall be performed. And they went away. And in the morning, all the people assembled in a vast crowd around the sacrificial stone, and the king sat near, upon his throne. And they led up the victim, covered with a veil: and the officiating priest stood ready with a knife. Then they took off the veil from the victim, and uncovered her: and the king looked, and saw, not Priyadarshiní, but Shrí.

And then, in agony, he bounded on his throne. And the world vanished from his sight, and he waved his hands, not knowing what he did. And he cried out, with a voice like a trumpet: Ah no! ah no! not Shrí: not Shrí! But the priest raised the knife. And as he did so, it caught in his garments, and fell to the ground. And in a moment he regained it, and raised it, and struck. But in that instant, the king threw himself like a tiger upon the body of his wife. And the knife fell, and pierced his heart.

And then Shrí rose, from under the body of the king. And she looked for a moment at the crowd around her, and sat down upon the ground, and took the king's head upon her lap, and fell upon it, and followed him into the other world. Then dead silence fell upon the people, and they waited in fear. And at last the priest said: The sacrifice

is complete, and the gods are appeased: for they have gained, not a life for a life, but two for one.

Then the *chéti* stopped. And she laid the flower at the king's feet, and turned to go. But the King shook with agitation. And his voice trembled, as he said: What! wilt thou go so soon, almost before thou hast arrived? O tell me another tale, that I may listen to thy voice. Or, if thou wilt, say nothing: stand only where thou art, and let me watch thee: so shall thy brow, and thy smile, and the colour of thy dark blue eyes melt deep into my soul, and remain there fixed like a never-fading dye, to keep me from despair when thou art gone. Then she turned and stood. And suddenly she came up close to the King, and laid her hand upon his arm. And she said: O King, now I must go, for it is time. But wait: it may be that my mistress will send me back again: for there are matters to arrange for the morrow. And she smiled at the King, and went away quickly through the wood, while he stood motionless, and watched her as she went. And then he stooped, and picked up the flower. And he said: *Shamí*, thou hast, like me, fire in thy heart,[1] and what thou art to the *ashwattha*,

[1] The primeval fire was generated by the friction of the *shamí* and *ashwattha* trees. Kalidas (*Raghuwansha*, III. 9) calls the *shamí* "*abhyantaralínapáwakam*," *i. e.*, that "which has fire in its heart."

that is she who laid thee at my feet to me. Like thee, I needed but the touch of her hand to burst into a flame. And here I will await her, on the edge of the pool: and if she does not come, I will not live to see another dawn.

And he waited by the pool, getting up and sitting down in his impatience, and fixing his eyes on the place where the *chétí* had vanished in the wood. And meanwhile the hours followed one another, and the sun rose higher and higher in the sky. And the heat grew, till the lotuses shone like silver on the lake slumbering beneath them; and the fish slept in the water, and the birds upon the trees, and the bees grew tired of humming and lay drunken in the flowers, and the forest hushed as if it were buried in a swoon, and the leaves forgot to rustle on the boughs. And suddenly, as he watched, the King saw Madhupamanjarí reappear in the distance, there where she had gone away; and she stood for a moment like a picture on the wall, while the King gazed at her in an ecstasy, listening in the silence to the beating of his heart. Then, after a while, she broke the spell, and moved. And she came towards him very slowly, and stood before him. But she carried nothing in her hand. And she

said: O King, my mistress wishes for a lotus, and has sent me to fetch it from her lord.

And the King looked at her, as she stood before him, with her eyes fixed upon the ground, and her long lashes lying like shadows on her cheek. And his heart rose into his mouth, and he stood silent; and he tried to speak, but the words died upon his lips. So they two stood there in the forest, surrounded by the stillness. And at last the King spoke. And he said: Dear *chéti*, there is a thing that I would ask thee: but I am afraid. Then she said: What does the King fear? And she looked at him for a moment with a smile that vanished from her lips almost before it had appeared; and dropped her eyes. Then he said: *Chéti*, canst thou tell me whether I am in love with thee, or not?

And as the King watched her, he saw the colour come and go upon her face. And at last she said, slowly: How can the physician decide, who does not know the symptoms?

Then the King went up, and stood close to her. And he put his two hands behind him, and shut them together tight, and leaned towards her, and said: Therefore I ask thee, because I cannot tell, whether I am in love with thee, or not. For once before, I thought I was in love, but then I felt not as I do now. And if then I was in love, I am not

now; and if now, I was not then. And it may be thou canst tell me, for thou art very clever, as I am not. For when I see thee coming, darkness spreads over my eyes, and fire leaps and rushes through my frame. And the sound of thy voice makes me faint, and burns me like the touch of ice: and a shiver runs like a flame over my limbs, and a deafening noise booms in my ears, and I know not what I do. And tears stand in my eyes, and yet I wish to laugh for joy; and if I try to speak, my voice trembles, as it does now; and there comes into my throat a struggle, and an obstacle, and I try to breathe and cannot, and pain presses at my heart. And what else I feel, I cannot tell; but this I know, that when thou art with me, it is life, and when thou leavest me, it is death.

But Madhupamanjarí stood silent. And her lower lip trembled, and a tear stood upon her lashes, and her breast heaved slowly up and down. And at last she raised her eyes, and smiled through her tears, and she said: O King, it is better that I should go: for these are words fitter for my mistress than for me.

And then the King drew a long breath, and he stood up. And he looked that way and this way: and he laughed. And he said: Thou hast driven me to desperation, and I care not. Lo! I am a

man and a strong man, and thou art a woman, and but a small one. Hence thou shalt not go, for thou carriest away my life.

And suddenly, he seized her in his arms, and held her tight. And as he did so, she shrieked, and struggled. And half frightened, and half laughing, she exclaimed: *Aryaputra*,[1] let me go. Hast thou not guessed that I am the Queen?

And the King started, and leaped into the air, as if a sword had been run into his heart. And as he stood astounded, Madhupamanjarí looked at him, and almost against her will, began to laugh. And he stood gazing at her, first with amazement, and then with shame, and lastly with delight. And he exclaimed: Laugh as thou wilt, for thy laughter is music to my ear, and I care not, so long as thou art with me. But O thou delusive *chétí*, what is this? Was it not thou that wouldst not let me deceive the Queen? And yet what hast thou done to me?

And instantly, Madhupamanjarí stopped laughing, and tears fell instead from her eyes. And she looked at her husband with a smile; and suddenly she came to him and took him by the

[1] As much as to say, *my husband*. The word is used by ladies in addressing their lords.

hand. And she led him away, and sat him down upon the steps, and said: Sit thou there, and I will tell thee. Then she knelt beside him on the right, and put his right hand round her, and took his left in her own. And she said: Foolish one, and didst thou think, because one was light as stubble, that all other women were the same? And didst thou also think, that thy life could be passed without the nectar of a woman? Listen now, and I will tell thee what thou dost not know. For when my father sent to offer me to thee, I also sent my messenger, who brought to me thy portrait, and told me all about thee, and I loved thee long before I ever saw thee. And I determined that it should be the same with thee: and I made thee long for me, not knowing who I was. And but one day I was weak, and that was the day I did not come to thee, and I passed it in weeping for thee, and to keep away was almost more than I could do. And now, I will show thee what thou hast never known, the sweetness of thy life. For when thou art joyous, I will double all thy joy: and when thou art sad, I will halve thy sorrow and remove it, and it shall be a joy to thee, deeper than joy. And when thou art well, I will surfeit thy soul with amusement and variety, and when thou art sick, I will nurse thee: and if thou art weary, thou shalt sleep upon my

breast, and it shall be thy pillow: and night and day my spirit shall be with thee, and my arms around thee. And when thou dost not want me, I will be absent; and when thou wishest me again, I will be there. And if I should die before thee, it is well, and thou shalt miss me: but if thou leavest me behind, then will I follow thee through the fire, for I will not live without thee, no, not even for a day. For like a dream, and like moonlight, and like a shadow, and the image on the surface of a pool, I must vanish into nothing, when that which gave me substance and reality is gone. For what am I, but a double and a copy and an echo of a Being which is Thou? my duty and religion, to be thy Dhruwá and Arundhatí, thy Rati and thy Rádhá, thy Chakrí and thy Kshetrabhúmí, thy Shakti and thy Twin?[1] Churn me only with the mountain of thy love, and like the milky ocean, I will give thee up my essence, and show thee that a faithful wife is the butter of

[1] *Dhruwá*, "thy polar star": an allusion to the marriage ceremony, in which the bridegroom points out to his bride that star, the emblem of fidelity; *Arundhatí*, the "patron saint" of Hindoo marriages, the pattern of a perfect wife. *Rati*, the wife of Káma; *Rádhá*, Krishna's darling, the lovely milkmaid. The last two names are mystical: "thy other half," "thy Self, in feminine form." *Chakrí*, the bird that pines and dies without its mate; *Kshetrabhúmí*, an idea hardly intelligible save to a Hindoo. It means an exclusive possession, a thing to use and abuse, and a home: a sacred spot of mother earth and cultivable soil, whose memory is twined around the heart.

beauty, and wine of youth, and syrup of pleasure, and salt of laughter, born of the foam of the waves and the lather of the sea.[1] And I will be to thee a nectar and a camphor and a lotus and a sweet, and show thee the essence and the savour of thy life; and thou shalt own that without me it was blank, and a word without a meaning, and a night without a moon.

And then the King took her head, and held it in his hands. And he looked into her eyes, and knew that her words were a confession of the truth. And suddenly, with a violent effort, he tore himself away from her, and stood up; for the passion of his joy was more than his heart could endure. And then in an instant he returned to her. And he said: Dear *chéti*, thou hast forgotten something. And she said: What? Then he said: Wilt thou not take a lotus for thy mistress from the pool?

Then Madhupamanjarí laughed with delight. And she said: O King, thou hast said well. And they turned together, and moved towards the pool. And as they went, the King looked at her, and trembled. And he said to himself: Still she

[1] A passage full of plays on words and mythological allusions.

has not kissed me: and it is still to come. Then they drew near to the pool; and they found a lotus growing at its edge. And the King said: Thou shalt pluck it, and I will hold thee in my arms, lest thou shouldst fall into the water. And he took her in his arms; and they leaned over the pool. And Madhupamanjarí stretched out her hand to the lotus. Then the King whispered in her ear: See, I have brought thee to the water, that there might be two of thy faces instead of one. Now, which shall I kiss, and which will kiss me, the *chétí* or the queen?

And Madhupamanjarí plucked the lotus. And she turned towards him, and said: Both.

The Descent of the Sun

(त्रिविक्रमाधोगाश्रीः)

A Cycle of Birth

स्वप्ने ततो मया दृष्टं नभसश्च्युतमम्बुजम्

"and in a dream I saw a lotus fallen from heaven"

Dedicated to Margaret

जाग्रत्स्वप्नप्रपंचदर्शनम्

(The illusion of a waking dream.)

Like a Digit of the Moon
  In the Shadow of the Earth
Spirit undergoeth Swoon
  In the Vestibule of Birth:
Dreameth transitory Trouble,
  Weareth Hues of Heaven, hurled
Hither, thither, as a Bubble
  On the Ocean of the World.

INTRODUCTION

HERE is a fairy tale which I found in an old Hindoo manuscript.

As the title shows, it is a solar myth. Literally translated, its name is: *The Glory of the Going Down of the Sun.* But this is only the exoteric, physical envelope of the inner, mystical meaning, which is: *The Divine Lustre* [1] *of the Descent (Incarnation) of Him Who took Three Steps:* i. e. Wishnu, or the Sun, the later Krishna, or Hindoo Apollo. And this epithet of the Sun is explained by the well-known passage in the Rig-Weda (I. 22. 17 [2]), "*Three steps did Wishnu stride: thrice did he set down his foot*"; a mythological expression for the rise, the zenith, and the set of the Sun. But the old magnificent simplicity of the

[1] *Shrí* also means a Sacred Lotus, and it is the name of the twelfth Digit of the Moon; thus indicating the position of this story in the series to which it belongs; for an account of which, and the manuscript, I may refer the reader to the preface to its predecessor *Shashiní*, entitled *A Digit of the Moon.* [See p. 9.]

[2] Cp. also I., 154, 155, and elsewhere. It should be observed that learned doctors differ as to the interpretation of the *three strides:* but this is not the place to examine their views.

Rig-Weda was perverted by subsequent Pauranik glosses; and Wishnu, according to the new legend, was said to have cheated his adversary, Bali, by striding, in his Dwarf Incarnation, over the three worlds. In our title, a different turn is given to the old idea, which we may express by saying that the steps commence, not with the rise, but the set of the Sun: his Going Down, his mysterious period of Darkness, his Rising again. This is the inverted Race, or Cycle of the Sun, which so much exercised the mind of primitive man, and seemed to be a symbol of the mystery of Birth and Death.

And ours is a strange story; which seemed to the translator not unworthy of being clothed in an English dress, containing as it did so much in little bulk that, as the French say, *donne à penser*. Absolutely Hindoo in its form and spirit, it is for an Englishman full of associations, and instinct with that philosophical mythology, scraps and fragments of which are familiar to him in the story of the Fall and the poetry of Milton, in many an old fairy tale, in some touches of Pythagoras and Plato, and some religious legends. *Lux in tenebris:* a dazzling light in the most profound darkness; the night of the sun; a heavenly body, doomed to put on mortality and suffer for a period in this lower world of darkness, birth, and death: in some such ways as these we may ex-

press its central idea. But for the reader not acquainted with Sanskrit it may be worth while to point out that there runs throughout it a veiled allegory, which he would not be apt to detect, of the teaching of the Sánkhya Philosophy of Kapila (who is older than Thales); according to which it is the duty of PURUSHA, the archetype of the spirit of man the Primæval Male, to hunt for and pursue PRAKRITI, the feminine personification of material Nature, the Eternal Feminine, till he finds her; when instantly she disappears "like an actress." [1] In this respect, the story somewhat recalls the *Gita-Gowind* of Jayadewa, which according to one school of interpreters, deals with the Soul, personified as the lovely Rádhá, in its search after the Divine. For among the Hindoos, the earthly and the heavenly love are always confounded.

And let not any one suppose that the lesson embodied in these pages is obsolete or dead in the India of to-day. I wrote the last lines of this translation late one evening, and I walked out in the dusk to the bridge across the river, about half a mile away. There was not a breath of air.

[1] From this point of view, the period of Night would be the reign of *Tamas*, one of the three great categories of that philosophy: the Quality of *Darkness*, as opposed to *Light; Ignorance*, as opposed to *Knowledge; Evil*, as opposed to *Good;* the World *Below*, as opposed to the World *Above*.

It was a night as still as that which long ago Medea chose on which to work her spells: nothing moved save the twinkling stars; all below was plunged in sleep, every tree a picture, every leaf seemed carved in stone: only, every now and then, a flying-fox burst screeching from a branch. And as I stood upon the bridge, I could hear a faint din of tom-toms coming from the distant city of the Peshwas. I looked westwards, up the river. The sun had set, leaving behind it a ruddy glare which faded higher up the sky into the darkness: and exactly on the confines of the colours, in that bath of *nilalohita*, that *purple-red*, which is a favourite epithet of the god Shiwa, hung, like a thing in a dream, the lovely streak of the new moon, one day old. All was reflected in the still mirror of the broad sheet of water formed by the river *Bund*, or dam.

I turned round. On the eastern side, below the bridge, the river runs in disconnected pools. All was buried in dark and gloom. But about two hundred yards away, on the right bank, there were a red spot and leaping flames. They were burning on the bank a corpse, whose former owner had died of plague. For here in Poona it is now, as it was of old in the days of Homer, *αἰεὶ δὲ πυραὶ νεκύων καίοντο θαμειαί*. . . .

Suddenly a voice said behind me: They burn

well on a cold night. I looked round. Beside me stood a Hindoo, whose real name I do not think it lawful to mention. His white clothes were stained and splashed all over with red, for the Holi festival had left its mark on him.

Why, Wishwanáth, I said, what are you doing here? Or have you come, like me, merely *dekhne ke wáste*, to see the sun set, and "eat air"?

Wishwanáth cast a careless glance at the sky. Yes, he said, it looks well from here: but then I have seen it so often. It was a new moon yesterday.

And very soon it will be old. Look, Wishwanáth, here is a strange thing. See, there on that side is the moon, following the sun to rest in a bath of fire, and they will both appear to-morrow all the better for it. But now, look down there. There is another thing passing away in the fire. But how will it be with *that?*

And I pointed to the burning pyre on the other side.

The Hindoo looked steadily at it for a moment, and then at me. It will be just the same, he said.

What! you think that *that* will come back again, like sun and moon?

He did not answer for a moment. Then he said slowly, in a low voice, as if speaking rather to

himself than me: How should it not return? *na jáyate mriyate wa kadáchit.*[1]

I looked at him, but said nothing. He continued to gaze steadily at the burning pyre, in silence, and I did the same. The flames were dying down: their work was done.

Metempsychosis, transmigration, everlasting incarnation and re-incarnation of the immortal soul in body after body, birth after birth: all Hindoo literature is but the kaleidoscopic reiteration of this one identical idea, whose beauty is such that no logic will ever destroy it or oust it in favour of another. For the Sanskrit language is a kind of shrine, consecrated to the embodiment and immortalisation of this philosophical myth. The Hindoos are possessed by it; it is their hereditary heirloom, *Kramágatam*, the legacy from an immemorial past: it is all that they have left. And nations, like the characters in our story, cling desperately, in periods of degradation and eclipse, to all that reminds them of a former state of ideal prosperity, which lingers in their literature and echoes in their souls, like dim recollections of a forgotten paradise, or faint reminiscences of a former birth. Distance lends enchantment, and time effaces detail, and endows stern realities

[1] From the Bhagwad-Gítá: IT *is never born and never dies.*

with dreamy beauty; and thus a rugged, stony past fades gradually into a picture, blue, soft, and unutterably beautiful, like some low, barren island, seen far away in the haze, over a hot and glittering sea.

POONA,
March 21, 1903.

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[NOTE.—As the story belongs, by its title, both to Sun and Moon, it should be observed that the Night and the two Twilights, Dusk and Dawn, apply to both in opposite ways. The Moon rises when the Sun sets, reigns over the Night when he is buried in Darkness, and either sets or vanishes when he is risen in his light. For the Moon is the type of Night, or this lower world (*ihaloka*), but the Sun, of Day, that is, of the other.]

Sunset

An Evil Eye

Invocation

O glorious and infinite Spirit of Peace, Lord of Ascetics, who whirling round in thy wild dance dost lend, as it were, its colour to the sky, in whose mirror are seen reflected the blueness of thy throat and the silver digit of the moon in the matted tufts of thy tawny hair, thee we adore. And we worship the ever victorious trunk of the Elephant of Elephants, whose fierce glare consumes the innumerable hosts of opposing obstacles, as a forest fire shrivels the blades of dry grass.[1]

Long ago, on the slopes of Himálaya, there lived a young King of the Spirits of the Air, named Kamalamitra[2]; for he was a portion of the Sun. And he worshipped the husband of Umá.[3] And he turned his back on the pleasures of the senses, and went afar off, and dwelt alone, among the icy peaks and snowy plateaux that lie around Kailás. And there he remained, living

[1] For Ganésha's trunk is usually smeared with vermilion. The other deity is, of course, Shiwa.

[2] "*The lover of the lotus*," *i. e.*, the Sun. *Mitra* is also one of his names. [*Kam-* rhymes with *drum.*]

[3] *I. e.*, Shiwa. Umá is his wife.

at first upon leaves, and then upon smoke, and finally upon air, performing penances of appalling severity, till after a hundred years [1] that Lord of Creatures was moved to compassion. And he appeared to him, in the twilight of evening, in the guise of an ascetic, but in stature like a tall tree, with the new moon in his hair, and said: I am pleased with thy devotion, so now I grant thee a boon: ask. Then the young King bowed before him, and said: Blessed One, let me continue in this contemplation of thee: that is enough. Then said Maheshwara: This is well said: nevertheless, ask of me some boon. Then said Kamalamitra: Since it is so, and I must absolutely choose, then give me a wife, whose eyes, like these hills and this sky, shall be full of the dusky lustre [2] of thy throat and thy moon, as if, insatiate of gazing at thee, they had become, not transitory mirrors, but pictures permanently stained with thy glory. For so shall she be a medium of devotion between me and thee.

Then the moon-crested god was pleased. But he looked into the future, by his magic power of

[1] This is a sort of Hindoo *façon de parler:* it must not be supposed to make him any the older.

[2] *Nila.* As this colour is the keynote of the story, it should be observed that it is a deep, intense blue, inclining to black, essentially associated in Hindoo literature with the moon-crested god, peacocks, and the lotus.

divination, and saw what was coming. And he said slowly: Eyes such as these will be dangerous, not only to others, but also to their owner. Nevertheless, I have given thee a boon: thou shalt have thy desire.

Then he disappeared, and Kamalamitra returned home rejoicing. And by the favour of the deity all the emaciation and fatigue of his penances left him, and he became strong as Bhima and beautiful as Arjuna.[1] And he arrived at his palace on the evening of the next day, and went into the garden to repose, as the sun was going down. And as he went, he looked before him, and suddenly he saw a woman in a boat of sandal, with silver oars, floating on a pool of white lotuses. And her glances fell on those snowy flowers, and turned their tint to blue, for her eyes were lowered: and she was resting her chin on one hand as she lay, and with the other dropping one by one into the water the petals of a lotus red as blood. And the round curve of her hip stood up like a sand-bank, and was mirrored again in the silent water below. And her lips moved, for she was counting the petals as they fell.

And Kamalamitra stood still, holding his breath, and gazing at her, fearing to move, for he thought it was a dream. Then all at once she

[1] Characters in the Mahábhárata.

looked up and saw him, and smiled, bathing him with the colour of her eyes. And it seemed to Kamalamitra that he stood in a pool of colour formed by the essence of all the blue lotuses in the world. And then suddenly he remembered the boon of the god who is clothed with heaven,[1] and he exclaimed: Surely thou art my own wife, sent me by the god who keeps his promises, and none other. For yesterday I gazed at his glory, and now I am gazing at thy two eyes, and it is the same. And if it be so, by what name shall I call thee? Then she said: My name is Anushayiní,[2] and for what purpose did the Creator form these eyes, but to reflect the image of their lord?

Then Kamalamitra, having thus obtained her from the deity, took possession of his lovely little wife, and thereafter remained with her in the region about Kailás, utterly bewildered and intoxicated by constantly gazing at those mirrors of deity, her two great eyes. And he plunged into their sea, and was drowned in it, and the whole world seemed to him to be made of lotus blue.[3]

[1] *Digambara.*

[2] "*A devoted wife.*" But the word has another technical philosophical significance: it connotes evil, clinging to the soul by reason of sin in a former birth, and begetting the necessity of expiation in another body.

[3] *Kuwalayamayamjagat.* When I was young, sings Bhartrihari, the whole world seemed to me to be made of woman (*nárimayam*).

And like a vessel filled to the brim and running over, he was so overflowing with delight in her beauty, and the pride of having so unique a specimen of womankind all to himself, that he could not contain his emotion, but sought relief in going about everywhere, talking about her, and trying to get everybody to acknowledge, what he thought himself, that all other women in the world were absolutely nothing in comparison with his own wife. Alas! a woman is one thing, and emancipation quite another.

So it happened, that on a day when he was disputing about her with one of his friends, and abusing him for not readily admitting all his own eulogies of his wife, that friend of his suddenly burst out laughing, and exclaimed: For all things there is a cure, even for snake-bite there is a cure, but there is no cure for one who has been bitten with a woman's beauty. Know, O thou infatuated lover, that the golden glamour of our Other Half, Man's ectype, Woman, is not like a simple musical theme, but one infinitely various, containing ten thousand notes, and stirring like a churning-stick all the emotions in the ocean of the soul of man. And however beautiful may be thy wife's eyes, still eyes are only eyes, and a woman is not all eye, but something more. For one woman witches us, like a waterfall, with the

music of her bubbling laughter, and another entrances us, like a forest-pool, with the peace of her shadowy silence. And one entangles us, like Yama,[1] in the nectar-nooses of her hair, while another pierces us, like Manobhawa,[2] with the archery of her poisoned eyes. And one inflames us, like the Sun, in the fever-fire of sick desire, while another soothes us, like the Moon, by the camphor of her dewy kisses. And like oxen, we are goaded by the biting sting of one woman's evil, and like elephants, we are tamed by the subtle spell of another's purity; and like birds, we are decoyed by the lure of the bower of one girl's arms, and like bees, we hover and sip around the honey of another's lips, and like snakes, we wind and coil [3] round the slender stem of one girl's waist, and like weary travellers, we long to sleep on the living pillow of another's bosom. Then Kamalamitra broke in impatiently: Away with the fascinations of all the women in the three worlds, past, present, or to come! Could they unite to form the very body of the god of love, yet the eyes of Anushayiní, alone, would, like the eye of the enemy of Kaudarpa,[4]

[1] Death, who is represented with a noose (*pásha*).

[2] Love, whose weapon is his bow.

[3] There is here an untranslatable play on the word *bhoga:* which means both the coil of a snake and enjoyment.

[4] Alluding to the legend that Shiwa annihilated the god of love, who was endeavouring to inflame him, by a fiery glance

reduce them to ashes. Aye! those eyes, with their blue irresistible invitation, would succeed in corrupting sages, where Menaká, Tilottamá,[1] and the rest had failed.

Then his friend laughed in derision, and said: Boasting is useless, and in words all men can do everything, and every woman is another Rambhá.[2] Babble no more of her beauty, but come, let your paragon of a wife put her power to the proof. For hard by here, in the wood on the hillside, is an aged Sage, named Pápanáshana,[3] whose austerities terrify even the gods. He would be an admirable touchstone for the eyes of this wonderful wife of yours, whose beauty exists, like a bubble, only on the stream of your words.

And then, stung by the taunt, Kamalamitra exclaimed in wrath: Fool! if she does not turn him from his asceticism as easily as amber draws after it stubble and grass, I will cut off my own head and cast it into the Ganges. Then his friend laughed again, and said: Do nothing rash,

from his third eye. Love's sacred fire met in this case, for once, with an element more potent than his own.

[1] The legend of St. Antony is but a Western echo of the stories of these nymphs, whom the jealous gods employed as weapons to destroy the virtue of sages whose accumulated asceticism was becoming *mountainous* and dangerous. Like the Devil, and long before him, they baited the hook with a pretty woman.

[2] See the Rámayan, Book I.

[3] "*Destroyer of guilt.*"

thou art not Daksha [1]: once gone, thy head can never be restored. But Kamalamitra hurried away to find Anushayiní. And he found her in the garden by the lotus pool, and told her of his brag, and said: Come instantly, and make the experiment, and vindicate the power of those wonderful eyes of thine, and my own faith in them, without delay. For I burn to convict that foolish sceptic of his folly, by ocular demonstration.

Then Anushayiní said slowly: Dear husband, thou wert angry, and therefore indiscreet, and I fear lest, by doing evil, we may bring on ourselves punishment. For expiation follows guilt, as surely as Orion treads on the heels of Rohini.[2] There is sin and danger in this rash experiment. And now it will be better for us not to venture upon the verge of a precipice, over which we may both fall into irreparable disaster.

But as she spoke, her eyes rested on Kamalamitra, and bewildered him, and destroyed the persuasion of her words. For he heard nothing that she said, but was full of the blindness of passion, and more than ever convinced of the omnipotence of her beauty. And so, seeing that

[1] Whose true head was cut off and replaced by that of a ram.

[2] An astronomical simile: the ninth and tenth signs of the lunar zodiac.

she could not turn him from his will, Anushayiní gave in, and yielded to him as to her deity. Nay, in the interior of her heart she rejoiced to find that she could not dissuade him, for she was filled with curiosity herself, to see whether in truth her beauty would prevail over the ascetic, though she trembled for the consequences. Alas! where beauty, and curiosity, and youth, and self-will, and intoxication combine, like a mad elephant, where is the cotton thread of self-control?

Then those two lovers kissed each other passionately, like travellers who had been separated for a year. And yet they knew not that they were doing so for the last time. And then they went together to the forest, to find that old ascetic. And hand-in-hand they rambled about, like a pair of Love's arrows in human form,[1] till they penetrated to the very heart of that wood. And there on a sudden they came upon that old sage, and saw him standing, plunged in meditation, motionless as a tree. And around him the ants had built up their hills, and his beard and hair trailed from his head, like creepers, and ran down along the ground, and were covered with leaves:

[1] They were not human, but semi-divine: still, it is impossible to express the idea of incarnation except in terms of humanity.

and over his withered limbs played a pair of lizards, like living emeralds. And he looked straight before him, with great eyes that mirrored everything, but saw nothing, clear and unfathomable and still, like mountain tarns in which all the fish are asleep.

And Kamalamitra and Anushayiní looked at him awhile in silence, and then at each other, and trembled, for they knew that they were staking their souls. But as he wavered, the thought of his friend's derision came back into Kamalamitra's mind, and filled him with anger. And he said to Anushayiní: Advance, and let this old *muni* [1] see you, and I will mark the result.

So Anushayiní went forward, obeying his command, and stepped over the leaves with feet lighter than themselves, till she stood in front of the sage. And when she saw that he did not move, she raised herself on tiptoe to look into his eyes, saying to herself: Possibly he is dead. And she looked into those eyes, and saw there nothing save two images of herself, like two incarnations of timidity, that seemed to say to her as it were: Beware! And as she stood there, trembling in the swing of uncertainty, Kamalamitra watched her with ecstasy, and laughed to himself; and

[1] "*Man of silence*," which, according to Kalidas and Bhartrihari, is the golden rule, whether for fools or sages.

said: Certainly that old *muni* is no longer alive, for otherwise she would have reached his soul through the door of his eyes, were it down in the lower world.

So as they stood there, waiting, gradually that old sage came to himself: for he felt that his meditations were being disturbed by something or other. And he looked, and saw Anushayiní standing before him like the new moon at the close of day, a pure form of exquisite beauty,[1] a crystal without a flaw, tinged with the colour of heaven. And instantly, by the power of his own mystical meditation, he divined the whole truth, and the exact state of the case. And he cast at that wayward beauty a glance, sorrowful as that of a deer, yet terrible as a thunderbolt: and immediately courage fled from her soul, and strength from her knees, and she sank to the ground with drooping head, like a lotus broken by the wind.

But Kamalamitra rushed forward, and caught her in his arms. Then as they stood together, the old ascetic spoke and cursed them, saying slowly: Irreverent lovers, now shall that beauty which occasioned this insolence meet with its appropriate reward. Descend now, ye guilty

[1] *Sushamásheshá:* an incomparable expression, meaning, as applied to the thin streak of the new moon at dusk, that everything of it was gone except its beauty: *venustas, et præterea nihil!*

ones, into mortal wombs, and suffer in the lower world the pangs of separation, till ye have purged away your guilt in the fire of human sorrow.

Then hearing the doom of separation, wild with grief they fell at his feet, and implored him, saying: Fix at least a term to the curse, and a period to our pain. And he said again: When one of you shall slay the other, the curse shall end.

Then those two unhappy lovers looked at each other in mute despair. And they drew in that instant from each other's eyes a deep draught of the nectar of mutual contemplation, as if to sustain them in their pilgrimage over the terrible sea of separation, saying, as it were, to each other, but in vain :[1] Remember me! Then all of a sudden they disappeared and went, like flashes of lightning, somewhere else.

But Maheshwara, from his seat on Kailás, saw them go, for as fate would have it, he chanced to be looking in that direction. And grasping the whole truth by mystical intuition,[2] he remembered his boon to the Spirit of the Air, and he said

[1] Because the former birth is always forgotten. But see the sequel.

[2] This power of gods and ascetics of a high order, frequently alluded to, reposes upon *yoga*, *i. e.*, intense concentration, which is the secret of Pátanjali. There is a kernel of truth in it, after all.

to himself: Now has the future which I foresaw become the present,[1] and the blue eyes of Anushayiní have produced a catastrophe. But I must not leave her lovely body to the play of chance, for it has in it something of my own divinity. And Kamalamitra, after all, was not very much to blame. For he was bewildered by my glory, reflected in her eyes. So I am the culprit, who is responsible for this state of affairs: and so I must look after this pair of lovers. Moreover, I have a mind to amuse myself with their adventures.[2]

So after considering awhile, that Master Yogi took a lotus, and placing it on the earth in a distant sea, it became an island. And he made in it, by his magic power, an earthly copy of a heavenly type, of a nature known to himself alone, for the future to unfold. And having completed his arrangements, he allowed the chain of events to take its course.

But the old sage Pápanáshana, when those two lovers had disappeared, remained in the forest alone. And their images forsook the mirror of his eyes, and faded away from his mind, like the shadow of a cloud travelling over the surface of a great lake, and vanished, and were utterly forgotten.

[1] *Time* is another name of Shiwa.

[2] The whole creation, according to Manu (i., 80) is the sport of the deity.

Night

A Sleep and a Dream

I

A LOTUS OF THE DAY

But Anushayiní,[1] when she disappeared in the forest, fell down to earth like a falling star, and entered the womb of the favourite wife of the King of Indirálaya,[2] and was born after the manner of mortals as his daughter. And at that moment she lit up the birth chamber with the radiance diffused from her body, which put the lamps to shame. And the nurses and waiting women were astonished, for wonderful to say! the lids of the child's eyes were fringed with long black lashes, looking like rain-clouds hanging low to hide the rising moon. And suddenly those lashes rose like a curtain, and there came from beneath them a flood of blue colour, which pervaded the room like the odour of camphor and sandal-wood made visible to the eye, and over-

[1] That is, her soul, as distinguished from her body: that part of her which, according to Plato and the Bhagwad-Gitá (more logical than modern theologians) *is never born and never dies.*

[2] *The home of Shrí, i. e.*, a blue lotus, which is so called because the goddess Shrí appeared floating in one at the Creation.

came the senses of all that stood by, till they were within a little of swooning away. And like men lying on their backs and gazing into the depths of the sky, they felt, as it were, enveloped in the colour of heaven, and lost their perception of mundane affairs. For though they knew it not, they were looking at the reflection of the glory of the moon-crested god.

So they all stood round in silence, watching the child's eyes. And at last, the King, and his ministers, and his physicians and astrologers, drew a long breath, and looked at each other in amazement. And the prime minister said: King, this is a wonderful thing. For these eyes are the eyes, not of a child, but of a sage,[1] or rather, of a god. And surely this is no mere mortal maiden, but rather some deity, or portion of a deity, smitten by a curse, and doomed thereby to descend for a period into this lower world, to expiate awhile sins committed in a former birth. For such things often come about. And beyond a doubt your Majesty is favoured, in being chosen by the deity to be the means of his incarnation. Then hearing this speech of his minister, whose words were always suited to the

[1] *Shánta:* one who has quelled the passions and attained peace. Of such, Shiwa is the chief. But the minister drew his bow at a venture, and knew not how he hit the mark.

events, the King was excessively delighted. And he celebrated the birth of his daughter with extraordinary magnificence, and gave gold and villages to Brahmans and the poor. And taking counsel with his astrologers and Brahman sages skilled in names and their applications, he gave to his daughter the auspicious name of Shrí.[1] For he said: Her eyes are like lotuses, and like the pools in which they dwell; and surely they are the very echo of the eyes of the Goddess of Beauty when she rose from the sea, and lay in her blue lotus cradle, lapped by the foam of which she was composed, and gazing at the wondering waves with eyes that mocked them, and robbed them of their hue.

Then time passed away, and the years with the seasons followed each other like caravans over the desert, and old age and grey hair came and took up their dwelling at the wrinkled root of the King's ear. And meanwhile Shrí grew from a child into a girl, and at length the dawn of her womanhood broke. And like the horns of the waxing moon, her limbs rounded and swelled into the very perfect orb of supreme loveliness, and she became, as it were, the very salt of the sea of beauty,[2]

[1] Hence the name of the city, above.

[2] Beauty and salt, in the original, are denoted by the same word.

inspiring in all who drank of it insatiable thirst, and an intolerable craving for the water of the blue lakes of her eyes. And at last there came a day when the King her father looked at her, and said to himself: The fruit is ripe: and now it is time that it was plucked and eaten.

So he went to the apartments of the women, to find her mother, his principal Queen, Madirekshaná.[1] But when she learned the object of his coming, the Queen said: *Aryaputra*,[2] it is useless. For our daughter will not even listen to the word "husband," much less undergo the thing. The King said: What is this? Should the cornfield refuse the plough, or a maiden refuse to be married? Is she not now of ripe age, and does not a grown-up maiden in the house bring upon herself and her relations infamy in this world and the next? Madirekshaná said: Speak to her yourself, and persuade her to it if you can. For of her own accord she told me that her marriage was a thing not to be thought of, even in a dream.

So the King sent for his daughter, to question her himself.

And after a while, Shrí came in, undulating as

[1] That is, "a woman with sweet seductive eyes."

[2] A pretty term employed by ladies in addressing their lords: "son of an *arya*, a gentleman." It has no English equivalent.

she moved like a swan,[1] and swaying like a flower waving in the wind: for her waist could be grasped by the fist, and her bosom was glorious, like the swell of an ocean wave. And like a child she smiled at her father [2] with parted lips and half-shut eyes, casting before her through the net of their lashes the magical charm of the colour of a wet lotus: and her girdle jingled as if with joy, while the flashing jewels with which she was covered all over changed colour, as if with envy at being outshone by the play [3] of her eyes. And the old King looked at her with pride and wonder and delight; and laughed to himself, and said: Wonderful is the cunning of the Creator, and incomprehensible the mystery of a woman's beauty! For I am old, and I am her father, and yet I feel before her like a domestic servant in the presence of a ruler of the world. Surely she would drive a young man into madness and ecstasy. And did the Creator, forsooth! form this incarnation of the intoxication of woman to no purpose? Surely she is a husband's ideal correlative in human form! And then he said to

[1] The old Hindoos had a special admiration and a special term (*hansagaminí*) for a woman who walked like a swan.

[2] There is here an untranslatable play on the word *kamalahása*, which means both *the opening of a lotus bud*, and an *irresistible smile*.

[3] *Wyatikara*, a word expressive of the *varying* lustre or *wavering* coruscation of jewels.

her: My daughter, it is high time that you were married: for an unmarried daughter is a scandal in her father's house.

Then said Shrí: Dear father, do not speak thus. Let me live and die a maiden, for I do not wish to be married.[1] The King said: Daughter, what is this that you are saying? Is not a husband the very object of your birth? Shrí said: Do not even dream of a husband for me. And there is a reason for this: for I am different from other maidens. And hearing this, the King was perplexed. And he looked at Shrí under his brows, and said to himself: She speaks truth. Certainly this daughter of mine, if she be mine,[2] is not like other maidens. For who ever saw her equal in beauty, or who ever heard of a maiden objecting to be married?[3] Or was my minister right, and is she really some deity in disguise?

So day after day he continued to urge her and argue with her. But at last, finding that his efforts to move her were as vain as if he were

[1] *Cf.* Callimachus:

Δός μοί παρθενίην αἰώνιον, ἄππα, φυλάσσειν.

[2] This touch arises from the beautiful word for a daughter, *átmajá*, *i. e.*, *she that is born from yourself*.

[3] A case, perhaps, not absolutely unknown in the West: though beauty, like a fortress, must always like to be flattered by a siege. But in the land of the Hindoos, marriage is like being born or dying, a matter of course, a thing necessary, inevitable, essential, *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*.

trying to pierce a diamond with a cotton thread, he exclaimed in dismay: Surely my crimes in a former birth were numerous and appalling, seeing that their fruit is a daughter whose obstinate and unintelligible prejudice against a husband runs counter to the nature of woman, and will be the means of destroying my salvation. Then at last Shrí said: Dear father, do not be angry, and I will tell you the truth. Know that I, too, wish for a husband, but only for one husband, and no other. Then said the King: And who, then, is that husband? Shrí said: I do not know. But he will come to claim me, from the Land of the Lotus of the Sun.[1] And where, said the King, is the Land of the Lotus of the Sun? Shrí said: I cannot tell. But in a dream I saw a lotus fall from heaven, and I heard a divine voice saying to me: Do not hurry, but wait: for there shall come to you a husband, from the Land of the Lotus of the Sun. For he was your husband in a former birth, and you shall know him by a sign. Then the King said: And what is the sign? Shrí said: I may

[1] There is, in the original here, a *nuance* not susceptible of direct translation. According to the Hindoos, lotuses are divided into those of the Day and Night, whose lovers are the Sun and Moon. The Lotus in question is a Sun-lotus "*between the Twilights*," *i. e.*, buried in night and deprived of the presence of the Sun. An allusion to the title of the story is thus introduced. But all this cannot be expressed in English, as it can in Sanskrit, by a single word.

not tell, for it is known only to the Deity and me. But now, either abandon my marriage, or if you can, find me a man who has seen the Land of the Lotus of the Sun, of caste becoming a king's daughter, and he shall be my husband. For him only will I marry, and none other.

And when the King heard this, he was astonished, and sat silent, looking at Shrí. And he said to himself: This is a strange story, and the conduct of this mysterious daughter of mine is inscrutable. What is this Land of the Lotus of the Sun? Is it a fancy, the capricious dream of a girl? Or does the dream really point to a previous existence? And he thought for a while, and then he said again: Perhaps it is better to do as she says, and endeavour to discover a man who has seen that Land. For where is the harm? For even if he is found, there will always be time to consider. And, moreover, in this way it may be that she will obtain a husband, whereas she will certainly not get married in any other. Better that she should get a husband, no matter how, no matter who, than remain a maiden to destroy us all.

Then he dismissed his daughter, and summoned his chamberlains, and said to them: Get criers, and send them through the city, and let them proclaim by beat of drum: That any high-caste man, who has seen the Land of the Lotus of

the Sun, shall share my kingdom, and marry my daughter. And his chamberlains wondered at hearing the order. But they went immediately, and told the criers the order of the King.

II

BY BEAT OF DRUM

So the criers went through the streets of the capital, beating drums and crying aloud: *Whatsoever high-caste man has been to the Land of the Lotus of the Sun, let him come to the King: he shall share the King's kingdom, and marry the King's daughter.* And hearing the proclamation, all the citizens and strangers in the city marvelled as they listened. For the fame of the beauty of the King's daughter had gone out into the three worlds. And buzzing like bees, they thronged around the criers, and ran up and down, everybody asking everybody else: What is this Land of the Lotus of the Sun? Where is it, or who has seen it? And a great uproar arose in the streets of the city, and they were full of noise and shouting: and the news was carried into the neighbouring kingdoms, and immediately crowds of people poured into Indirálaya from every part of Málwá and the Deckan and the North, and every quarter of the world, and together with the

merchants and the working castes, who all abandoned their ordinary business, gathered in knots and stood about, asking eagerly for news of that Lotus Land, and its nature, and its locality, and its peculiarities. But no one could be found who had ever even heard of it, much less seen it. So day by day the proclamation sounded in the streets: and all day long the city was full of the din of shouting criers and beaten drums, and all night long sleep fled from the eyes of the citizens, as if in disgust at the noise that they made by day. But all was in vain: for not a man could they find, nor did any one come forward to say: I have seen that Lotus Country: give me the reward.

And at last the citizens became enraged, alike with the King, and his daughter, and the Land of the Lotus, and themselves. And seeing this, the old King fell sick with anxiety; and he said to himself: My pretty daughter is as cunning as she is beautiful, and beyond a doubt this is some trick devised by her, to appease me, and avoid her bugbear of a husband, and befool us all. And now I fear that in their fury my subjects may break out into revolt, and refuse to pay taxes, or depose me. Out on my daughter and her blue eyes, and the cunning of women and their crooked hearts! Is there any such land in

the world as this Land of the Lotus of the Sun, of which in all my dominions, haunted by merchants and strangers from every quarter of the earth, no one has ever even so much as heard?

III

AN ECLIPSE OF THE SUN

Now Kamalamitra, when he was separated from Anushayiní by the curse of the ascetic, fell down to earth, and was born as the son of a King of the Solar Race in a distant country. And his father gave him the name of Umra-Singh,[1] for the astrologers said: He will live on earth like a lion, and run over it like his rival in the sky. And when he grew up, there was no one in that country who could match him in riding, or wrestling, or swordsmanship, or any other martial exercise; so that the people said of him: He looks like the very soul of the nature of a Kshatriya that has assumed a body suited to its deeds. Surely he is an incarnation of Kumára,[2] come down to earth for the destruction of the King's enemies. And the women flocked around him like flies

[1] The name is *Amarasinha*. But this is so certain to be a stumbling-block in an English mouth, that I have spelt it as it would be pronounced by a Hindoo. (*Um* as in *drum*.) It means "*lion-god*" or "*god-lion*," a name suited to a king of the line of the Sun.

[2] The War-god.

about honey, for their hearts were trampled to pieces, like lotuses, by the wild elephant of his glorious youth, and their souls were intoxicated with the nectar of the beauty of his figure, and followed him about like captives chained in rows. But Umra-Singh laughed at them all, and even outdid the moon-crested god,[1] in that he drank continually the deadly poison of the ocean of their seductions, without even staining his throat.

Then one day his father said to him: Come, now, I have arranged your marriage with the daughter of my most powerful enemy: so shall we become friends by the method of conciliation. Umra-Singh said: Find another bridegroom, for I have married my sharp sword. So his father was annoyed, and said: What is this folly, and whence can I procure another bridegroom? But Umra-Singh was silent. And three times his father repeated his words. Then after a while Umra-Singh said: Bridegroom or no bridegroom, I will not marry anybody but the lady of my dream. Then said his father: Who, then, is this lady of your dream? Umra-Singh said: I do not know. But every other month, on the last day of the dark fortnight, there comes to me in a

[1] Because, though Shiwa drank the *kálakuta* or deadly sea-poison, with impunity, still it left its mark on his throat and dyed it blue.

dream a vision of a woman, in a boat of sandal with silver oars, floating on a pool of white lotuses. But who she is I cannot tell, and her face I can never see, for it is always turned away.

Then his father began to laugh, and deride him. But Umra-Singh cared no more for the stream of his derision than Maheshwara for the Ganges when it fell on his head. Then his father said: Dismiss this delusion, and prepare for the wedding: for I have arranged the ceremonies, and appointed the day. But Umra-Singh laughed, and said: Marry her thyself: for I tell thee, I will not marry anybody, but the lady of my dream. Then his father flew into a rage, and summoned his guards, and threw the prince [1] into prison, saying to himself: He shall stay there, with his dream to keep him company, till he learns to obey. But Umra-Singh persuaded his gaolers to let him escape, for the subjects loved him more than his father. And he fled away by night into another country, abandoning his royal position for the sake of his dream.

And then he went from city to city, and from one country to another, eluding the pursuit of the agents sent after him by his father to bring him

[1] A *rajpoot* means only *the son of a king*, and it is to be observed that there were rajpoots in India long before the present "Rajpoots" ever came there.

back, till at last he came to Indirálaya. And he dived into a disreputable quarter of that city, like a frog into a well, and remained there disgusted with life and his relations, plunging into dissipation to drown his grief, and surrounded by gamblers and outcasts, counting the whole world as a straw, supporting himself on his own courage, and his dream. And little by little all he had melted away like snow in the sun of his generosity, or was swallowed up by the ocean of greedy gamblers, among whom he scattered it with an open hand, asking, like his ancestor,[1] nothing in return. And at last, being reduced to extremity, clad in garments worn and ragged, which, like clouds vainly obscuring the Lord of the Day, could not hide, but rather increased, the beauty of his form, with nothing left to eat or drink, he determined to abandon the body. So taking down his sword from the wall, and holding it in his hand, he went out of his wretched lodging, saying to himself: Death is better than dishonour and insignificance, hunger and the loathing of life: for what is death but the beginning of another life, which cannot be worse than this one, be it what it may? And who knows but that I may meet her in the next life whom I

[1] *I. e.*, the Sun. There are double meanings in this period, comparing him to the Sun.

dream of in this? For she who is but a dream now, may be a reality in another birth, and I may discover that lotus pool, waiting for me in another life. Therefore now I will go outside the city wall, and find some deserted garden, and there I will cut off my own head, and offer it up to Durgá as a sacrifice.

And as he stood at the door of the house, pondering which way he should go, there fell on his ear, for the hundredth time, the sound of the beating of drums. And he listened, and heard the criers crying: *Whatsoever high-caste man has been to the Land of the Lotus of the Sun, let him come to the King: he shall share the King's kingdom, and marry the King's daughter.* And Umra-Singh laughed, and said to himself: What! are they still looking for a man who has seen the Land of the Lotus of the Sun? And how, then, did they know that there was such a land to be seen?

And then on a sudden he started, as if he had been bitten by a snake. And he struck his hand on his sword, and exclaimed: Ha! But if nobody has ever seen that land, and no one knows anything about it, then, if one should come and say: Lo! I have seen it: who could discern whether he was speaking the truth or telling a lie? For who can compare the description with a reality which neither he nor any one else ever saw? So

what is to hinder me from going to the King and saying: I have seen that Lotus Land, and now, give me the reward? For here I am, about to put myself to death; and what greater evil can befall me at the hands of the King, even though he should discover the deceit? And yet, how can he? For who knows what that land is like, or even where it is? But if, on the contrary, I get credit, then I shall obtain, not only this far-famed daughter, for whom I care nothing, but also the resources of his kingdom; and with them I can equip an army, and go and compel my father to restore me to my position. So where is the harm? or rather, is it not pure gain, and no loss, to make the attempt and abide the result, whether I live or die?

Then instantly, without hesitation, he went up to the criers, and said to them: Cease your crying, and take me to the King, for I have seen that Lotus Land. But the criers, when they heard what he said, could not believe their ears, and almost abandoned the body from excess of joy. For they were almost dead from exhaustion, and continual shouting all day long. And they danced like peacocks at the sight of the first cloud in the rainy season, and caught him in their arms, holding him as if they were afraid he would escape, to carry him away, like a precious jewel, to the

King. And the news ran through the city like fire in a dry wood: There has been found a man who has seen the Land of the Lotus of the Sun. And a vast crowd of people ran from every street, and pressed around him, and accompanied him to the palace, and stood before it, tossing like the sea, while the guards took him in to the King.

But when the King heard the news, he wept for joy. And Umra-Singh seemed in his eyes like a draught of nectar, and like the fulfilment of all his desires in bodily form. And he said to him: O thou unspeakably delightful son-in-law that shall be, hast thou really set eyes on that accursed Land of the Lotus of the Sun? And Umra-Singh said boldly: Yes, I have seen it, and I know it well. Then immediately the King in his impatience ran himself to his daughter's apartments, and exclaimed: The bridegroom is found, by the favour of the Lord of Obstacles. Here is a Rajpoot who has seen the Land of the Lotus of the Sun. So prepare for the marriage without delay.

Then said Shrí: Dear father, there is no hurry in this matter. And how do you know that this man is speaking the truth, or is not, rather, some impostor, who only wishes to secure me and half your kingdom, by falsely asserting that he has seen, what in fact he never has seen? For the

world is full of such crafty rogues, who go about, like cranes, fishing in the wealth of Kings, like pools. Bring him therefore first to me, to examine him; and thereafter we shall see, whether it is time to prepare the marriage ceremonies, or not.

So the King said: Be it so. And he sent for Umra-Singh, and brought him into the presence of Shrí.

And Shrí looked and saw him standing, sword in hand, tall, and lean in the waist like a hungry lion, with shoulders like those of a bull, and long arms, and all the royal marks of a King. And she would have despised him for his rags and his nakedness, and yet for all that she would, she could not, but felt herself drawn towards him against her will. For her heart was stirred within her at the sight of him, and dim suggestions of that former birth, which she had forgotten, struggled in her soul, and strove to rise up out of its depths. And she stood, gazing at him in silence, with eyes that looked at him but did not see him, like those of one that listens to the tones of a long-forgotten voice, sounding in the hall of memory, and awakening longing and fond regret. And as she gazed, she poured over him a flood of blue colour out of her wondrous doubtful eyes.

And Umra-Singh looked at her, and the whole

world vanished from his sight in a mass of blue. And he reeled under the blow of her glances, which struck him mercilessly like a club, and time and space fled from his soul, which was filled with colour, and tears, and laughter, and pain, and he gasped for breath. For the sight of her half-remembered eyes clutched his heart, and stopped its beating like an iron band. And in that moment there rose before him the dream-woman of the lotus-pool, and he knew that it was Shrí.

So they two stood there, like pictures painted on a wall, gazing at each other, and groping in vain for recollection in the darkness of oblivion,[1] like shadows in a dream. And then, after a while, Shrí came to herself. And she said slowly: So thou hast seen the Land of the Lotus of the Sun? Then mention its peculiarities, and tell me how thou didst arrive at it.

But Umra-Singh stammered and hesitated. For her eyes had deprived him of his reason, and he could think of nothing else. And all his audacity had vanished, and become timidity, and he faltered, and spoke, not knowing what he said, with a voice that refused its office, and sounded in his ears like that of another man. And he said:

[1] *Adrishta:* a peculiar technical term, meaning something that has its roots in the *unseen* circumstances of a former birth.

Lady, I went I know not how, and wandered I know not how long, among wastes and deserts and mountains I know not how high, till I came to a land I know not where, called the Land of the Lotus of the Sun, I know not why.[1]

But as he spoke, the spell was broken, and Shrí woke as it were from a dream. And she saw before her only a ragged Rajpoot, stumbling in his tale, and abashed before her, and unable to support his knavery even by a clever lie. And she was ashamed, and angry with herself, and as she listened, she was suddenly seized with a fit of laughter. And she exclaimed: Hark! hark! to this high-caste hero; listen to his lay of a Lotus Land! He went he knew not where, and did he knew not what, and began at the beginning, and ended at the end. So she laughed and mocked him, while he stood before her as it were in a swoon, hearing only the music of her voice, and quailing like a coward before the fire of her scornful eyes.

Then suddenly Shrí clapped her hands in his face, and exclaimed: Dost thou hear, or art thou deaf as well as dumb? Art thou a Rajpoot, and yet couldst thou not find courage enough to carry out thy imposition to the end? Strange!

[1] No translator can give the alliterative jingle of the *yathás* and *tathás*, *yads* and *tads* of this and the answer of Shrí below.

that such a body could be chosen by the Creator as the receptacle of such a soul. And she turned to the King, and said: Dear Father, it is as I said, and as you see, this fellow is but a rogue. Put him out, therefore; and yet, do him no harm. For though he is a knave, yet he is a handsome knave, and deserves rather contempt and laughter, than punishment and blows.

Then the King said to his guards: Take this impostor, and thrust him out into the street. So the guards seized Umra-Singh, who offered no resistance, and threw him out into the street, raining upon him as he went a shower of kicks and blows. And immediately the criers went round the city as before, beating drums and crying aloud: *Whatsoever high-caste man has been to the Land of the Lotus of the Sun, let him come to the King: he shall share the King's kingdom, and marry the King's daughter.*

IV

INSPIRATION

But Umra-Singh lay in the street, more like a dead than a living man, covered with bruises and bereft of sense. And the people crowded round him, jeering and scouting and pointing at him, and giving him blows and kicks. And he looked

in the midst of those base mockers like a black antelope smitten by the hunters with a mortal wound, and surrounded by a troop of chattering monkeys Then by and by those scoffers left him lying, and went every man his way, for the sun was going down. And after a while, he came to himself, and rose up, though with difficulty, from the ground, and wandered away with stumbling feet, till he came to a tank in a deserted quarter, and lay down on its brink to rest. And sore though he was in all his limbs, he never felt the pain of his body: but his eyes were dazed with the blue glory of the bitter scorn of the eyes of Shrí, and the sound of her voice and her laughter rang in his ears, and in his heart was shame. So he lay long, gazing at the image of Shrí as it floated before him, and stung his soul like the teeth of a serpent, and yet soothed it like sandal, while the moon rose in the sky.

And then suddenly he sat up, and looked round. And he saw the tank, and the trees, and the moon's image in the water, and remembered where he was, and all that had occurred. And he sighed deeply, and said to himself: Woe is me! I have, like a dishonest gambler, cast my die, and lost the game. And now, I have gained no kingdom and no King's daughter, but only blows and shame. Alas! no sooner had I found my dream

than again I lost her, through the terrible operation of sins committed in a former birth. So now, nothing remains but to do as quickly as possible what I was about to do before I went to the palace, and put myself, in very truth, to death. For life seemed unendurable, before I had found the woman of my dream: but now it is worse by far, since I have found her only to become in her eyes a thing of scorn, more horrible than a hundred deaths.

And he took his sword, and felt the sharpness of its edge, and put it to his throat. And as it touched his skin, at that moment he heard in the silence of the night the voice of a warder, singing as he went his round upon the city wall: *Whatsoever high-caste man has been to the Land of the Lotus of the Sun, let him come to the King: he shall share the King's kingdom and marry the King's daughter.* And the sword fell from his hand, and he sprang to his feet, and exclaimed: What! she is for the man who has seen the Land of the Lotus, and here am I, a Rajpoot of the Race of the Sun, dreaming of death by this moonlit tank, while the Land of the Lotus is yet unfound! Now will I find that Lotus Country, be it where it may, and then come back and claim her, not as I did before, in jest, but by the right of the seer and the seen.

And instantly he picked up his sword, and

threw it into the air. And the sword turned like a wheel, flashing in the moonlight, and fell back to the ground. Then Umra-Singh took it up, and immediately went out of the city, making for the quarter pointed out like a finger by the blade of his sword.

V

NIGHTWALKER

And then as a black bee roves from flower to flower he wandered from city to city, and from one country to another: and he went north and east and west and south, till the elephants of the eight quarters knew him as it were by sight. Yet he never found any one who could tell him his way, or had ever heard the name of the Land of the Lotus of the Sun. And meanwhile the suns of the hot seasons burned him like a furnace, and the cold seasons froze the blood in his veins, and the rains roared over his head like a wild elephant, and at the last, he said to himself: Now for thrice six seasons have I been seeking, and yet I know no more of my way to the Land of the Lotus than I did before. And undoubtedly, if such a Land exists in the world, it can be known only to the birds of the air. Therefore now I will abandon the dwellings of men, and enter the Great Forest, for only in this way will it ever be possible for

me to discover a land of which no human being has ever heard.

So he went into the forest and proceeded onward, turning his face to the south. Then as he went the trees grew thicker and thicker, and taller and taller, till they shut out the light of the sun. And at last there came a day when he looked before him, and saw only a darkness like that of the mouth of death: and he looked behind him, and saw the light of evening glimmering a great way off, as if afraid to keep him company. And as he went on slowly, feeling his way with the point of his sword, suddenly in the darkness another face peered into his own, and stuck out at him a long red tongue. And Umra-Singh started back, and looked, and saw before him a root-eating Wairágí,[1] clad in a coat of bark, with long hair, and nails like the claws of a bird, and his legs and arms were bare, and his skin like that on the foot of an elephant.

Then said Umra-Singh: Father, what art thou doing here, and why dost thou stick out at me thy tongue? The Wairágí said: Son, what art thou doing here, in a wood full of nothing but

[1] This term denotes one who has turned his back on the world, and become free from passion. Its meaning can best be learned from the third section of the Centuries of Bhartrihari, devoted to it. (*Wair* rhymes with *fire*.)

trees and Rákshasas,[1] and dark as the hair of the Great God, of which it is an earthly copy? Umra-Singh said: I am a Rajpoot who has quarrelled with his relations, and I am looking for the Land of the Lotus of the Sun. Then said the Wairágí: They are very few that wish to find that Lotus Land; and fewer still who find it; fewest of all those, that having found it ever return. Then Umra-Singh said, in astonishment: And dost thou know that Lotus Land? Tell me how I must go to reach it. Then the Wairágí laughed, and said: Ha! ha! Thou art one more ready to ask than to answer questions: but I give nothing for nothing. Know, that I also have all my life been looking, not for one way only, but for three. And now, if thou wilt tell me my three ways, I will tell thee thine.

Then said Umra-Singh: One for three is no bargain; but what, then, are thy lost ways? The Wairágí said: All my life I have tried to discover the Way of the World, and the Way of Woman, and the Way of Emancipation,[2] and yet could

[1] *Jinn*, ogres, vampires, goblins, etc., are all but differentiations of the Hindoo *Rákshasa*, which is what the geologist calls a "synthetic type" of evil being, whose special feature is its power of changing its shape at will (*Kámarupa*).

[2] There is here an untranslatable play on the word *tripathagá, the three-way-goer, i. e.*, the Ganges, which flows in three *Ways*—in heaven, earth, and hell. The hermit asks, as we might say, for *the source of the Nile.*

never hit on the truth as to any one of them. And this is a wonderful thing. For anything characteristic of multitudes must be very common: and yet how can that which is common escape the notice of all? Tell me, then, the Way of the World, and I will tell thee in return a third of thy way to the Land of the Lotus of the Sun. Then said Umra-Singh: Thou puttest a knotty question, and drivest a hard bargain; nevertheless, I will give thee an answer, for the sake of my own way and the blue eyes of Shrí. Know, that this is the Way of the World. There was formerly, on the banks of the Ganges, an old empty temple of Shiwa. And one night, in the rainy season, an old female ascetic entered the temple, to shelter herself from the storm. And just after her there came in an owl for the same purpose. Now in the roof of that temple there lived a number of the caste [1] of bats, that never left the temple precincts. And seeing the owl, they said to the old woman: Who art thou, and what kind of animal is this? Then the old woman said: I am the Goddess Saraswatí, and this is the peacock on which I ride [2] Then, the storm being over, that old impostor went away. But the owl,

[1] The proper word for caste is *játi*, *gens*.

[2] Every Hindoo god or goddess has his or her peculiar animal vehicle (*wáhana*).

being pleased with the temple as a place of residence remained; and the bats paid it divine honours. Then some years afterwards, it happened, that a real peacock entered the temple. And the bats said to it: What kind of animal art thou? The peacock said: I am a peacock. The bats replied: Out on thee, thou impostor! what is this folly? The peacock said: I am a peacock, the son of a peacock, and the carriage of the Goddess Saraswatí is a hereditary office in our caste. The bats said: Thou art a liar, and the son of a liar, dost thou know better than the Goddess herself? And they drove the peacock out of the temple, and paid, as formerly, worship to the owl.

Then said the Wairágí: Rajpoot, thou hast opened my eyes. Learn now from me a portion of thy own way. And he lay down on the ground, and suddenly abandoning the form of a hermit, became a weasel, which stuck out at Umra-Singh a long red tongue, and entered the ground by a hole, and disappeared. And as Umra-Singh stooped down to examine the hole, he saw the Wairágí again beside him in his old shape, save that he continued to stick out of his mouth the weasel's tongue. And he said, angrily: What is this delusion of a weasel, and why dost thou stick out thy tongue? Then said the Wairágí:

Ho! ho! I have shown thee a way for a way, and one riddle for another. And now, tell me the Way of a Woman, and learn yet another third of thy own road.

Then Umra-Singh said to himself: Surely this is no hermit, but a vile Rákshasa, who only seeks to delude me. Nevertheless, I will give him an answer, for the sake of my way, and the blue light in the eyes of Shrí. And he said to the Wairágí: Know, then, that the Way of a Woman is this: There dwelt long ago, in the Windhya forest, an old Rishí. And the gods, being jealous of his austerities, sent to interrupt his devotions a heavenly nymph. Then that old Rishí, overcome by her beauty, yielded to the temptation, and had by her a daughter. But afterwards, repenting of his fall, he burned out his eyes with a fiery cane, saying: Perish, ye causes of perishable illusions: and so became blind. Then his daughter grew up alone with that old blind sage in the forest. And she was more beautiful than any woman in the three worlds. Verily, had the God of Love seen her, he would instantly have abandoned Rati and Príti,[1] counting them but as her domestic servants. And she dressed in bark garments, with no mirror but the pools of the forest. Then one

[1] Pleasure and Joy, the two wives of the God of Love.

day a crow that was acquainted with cities came to her and said: Why dost thou live here, with no companion but an old blind father, who cannot even see thee, and does not know the value of his pearl? The whole world does not contain a beauty equal to thine. Go and show thyself in cities, and I tell thee, the Kings of the earth would quit their kingdoms, and follow thee about like a swarm of bees. Then said the Rishí's daughter: And who, then, would fetch for my father his sacrificial fuel, or water to cook his cakes of rice and milk? And she drove away the crow, and lived on in the forest, serving her father, and at the last became old, and died in the forest, and no man ever saw her face.

Then said the Wairágí: Thou foolish Rajpoot, I asked thee for the Way of a Woman, and thou hast told me the Way of Emancipation. Then said Umra-Singh: Thou miserable root-eater, since the creation every woman has sacrificed herself for another, or else she was not a woman, for this is the nature of them all. Then said the Wairágí: Learn now from me, another portion of thy own way. And as Umra-Singh watched him, suddenly that deceitful Wairágí became a bat, and stuck out at him again his tongue, and flew away through the trees. And Umra-Singh said to himself: Beyond a doubt this is no ascetic,

but the very King of Rákshasas; nevertheless, he shall tell me my road, if he comes again, or it shall be the worse for him. And suddenly again he saw the Wairágí standing by his side, and sticking out at him, as before, his tongue. And he said to Umra-Singh: Now thou hast only to tell me the Way of Salvation, and thy own way will be clear before thee.

Then said Umra-Singh: Thou art but an old Rákshasa; nevertheless, once more will I give thee an answer, for the sake of my way, and the colour of the eyes of Shrí. Know, that the Way of Emancipation is this: There was formerly a King of the race of the Sun, and he was very old, and all his hair was as white as the uppermost peak of the Snowy mountain. And one day he looked from his palace window, and saw in the street a child, drawing behind it a toy cart. And the cart fell, and was broken, and the child cried over its broken toy. Now it happened, by the ordinance of fate, that long ago, when he was himself a child, exactly the same thing had happened to that old King. And as he looked at the child, suddenly the years were annihilated, and became as nothing. And like a picture he saw before him, the image of himself, a child. And seized with grief, and an unutterable longing for the repetition of his life, he exclaimed: O

Maheshwara, Maheshwara, let me live my life again. Then suddenly Maheshwara stood before him, and laughed, and said: Remember thy former births. And suddenly memory came upon that old King, and out of the darkness of the past there rose before him the series of his former lives. And Maheshwara said: See, nine and ninety times, in nine and ninety births, thou hast made of me the same request, and now this is a hundred. And every time I have given thee thy wish, in vain. For every time thou hast forgotten, and hast known the value of thy youth only after becoming old. Then said the old King: How, then, can emancipation be obtained? Maheshwara said: It depends not on time, but knowledge; and even an instant can bring it when ten thousand years have failed. And thou hast but a little left of life, yet even to thee knowledge may come before the end. Then he disappeared. Now that old King had a daughter whom he loved better than his own soul. And, even while he spoke with Maheshwara, she was bitten by a snake and died, and he did not know it, for they feared to tell him. So he went as usual to see his daughter. And when he entered her room, he looked, and saw her lying still. And as he watched her, there came a fly, which buzzed about her, and settled on her lips. Then horror

came on that old King, and illusion fell suddenly from his eyes, and the desire of life was destroyed in him at its root. And he turned, and went without waiting to the Ganges, and remained there a few years washing away his crimes, like one to whom life and death are the same, and at last entered the river, and it drowned him, and carried his body out to sea.

Then said the Wairágí: Now shalt thou have emancipation from thy own ignorance, as to thy way to the Land of the Lotus of the Sun. And he stuck out at Umra-Singh his tongue. But Umra-Singh suddenly struck at him a blow of his sword, and as luck would have it, he cut off the end of his tongue. And he said to him: Beware lest I kill thee, thou old impostor. I will waste no more time expecting to hear from thee my way to the Land of the Lotus, but find it in spite of thee. Then the Wairágí suddenly assumed a terrific form, and exclaimed: Woe to thee, thou unlucky Rajpoot! For thou art now in the land, not of lotuses, but of Rákshasas, of whom I am the chief. And my subjects shall beset thee with illusions, like the sins of thy former birth in visible form; and there wait for thee the Night-walkers, Ulupí, and the Cow-killer, and the Hairy Grabber, and the Icy Chiller, and the Flap-eared Buzzer, and the awful Watcher in his pits of

sand, and others without number [1]: and even shouldst thou escape them all, and reach the Lotus Land, thou hast still to return. And he vanished with a shout of laughter, and Umra-Singh was left alone.

VI

A LOTUS OF THE NIGHT

THEN he said to himself: Though I cut off the tongue of this ill-omened Wairágí, yet he never told me my way. And he went on, sword in hand, along a silver path, among trees that resembled Rákshasas, for they let in through the hair of their branches the light of the moon, which peered down at him as if out of curiosity, and lit him on his way as if in admiration of his courage. And as he went, gradually the trees grew rarer, and at length he looked before him, and saw in a clear space a dark blue forest pool, studded with moon-lotuses, as if created to mock the expanse of heaven bespangled with its stars, a mirror formed by Wedasa [2] to reproduce another world

[1] These names, which recall certain passages in the Rámayan, lose much of their effect in translation. *Goghna*, "cow-killer," has a curious history. Because of old a cow could be killed *only* for a guest of great honour, a word of the most horrible signification actually acquired one honourable meaning, *i. e.*, a guest of a high order.

[2] The Creator.

below. And all about it flitted fireflies, looking like swarms of bees that had returned with torches, unable to endure separation at night from the lotus flowers which they loved all day.

And as he gazed into the water, he saw in its smooth mirror the image of a woman, dancing. And as she danced, her robes of the colour of grass fluttered in the wind produced by her own movement over the curves of her limbs; and drops of water sparkled in the moonlight like gems on her bosom, which rose and fell like a wave of the sea in and out of the shadow of her hair: for that hair resembled a mass of the essence of the blackness of night And she chanted as she danced with a voice that sounded like a spell, and fanned the ear like a breeze from the Malaya mountain.[1] Then Umra-Singh raised his eyes, and saw the original of that water-painted woman-image, dancing on the other side of the pool.

Then she looked across and saw him, and their eyes met, travelling over the pool. And instantly she stopped her singing and dancing, and clapped her hands, and called to him like a *Kokila:* Come over to me, thou handsome stranger, for I am weary of dancing alone, and I have a question to ask thee. And she leaned against a tree and

[1] From which the sandal-wood comes.

stood waiting, with one hand on the trunk of the tree and the other on her hip, and a heaving breast: and she looked like a feminine incarnation of the essence of the agitation of the ocean, stirred by the sight of the moon. And Umra-Singh looked at her, and said to himself: Certainly the daughters of Rákshasas are more dangerous than their fathers. And now it is well, that I am fenced by the blue eyes of Shrí like a suit of armour, otherwise the glances of this forest maiden would like an axe long ago have cleft my heart in two.

Then he went round the edge of the pool, and found her on the other side. And she beckoned to him as he drew near with a bangled hand, and moving lips, and eyes that shone in the moonlight like the eyes of a snake. And she came and stood before him, and put her hand on his shoulder with a touch like a leaf, and looked up into his face with a smile, and said: I am Ulupí, a Daitya's [1] daughter, and here I live in the forest alone, with none to whom to compare myself, save my own image in the water. Tell me, for thou hast seen other women, hast thou ever met with eyes more beautiful than mine? And Umra-Singh looked down into them as into two dark pools, and he

[1] A kind of demon, "*a son of Diti.*" (Pronounce *dait-* as *white*.)

felt them pounding his heart like a pair of fists.[1] And he said to himself: She may well ask, and now, but for one other pair, her eyes need fear no rivals. But he said to her: Beauty,[2] thine eyes are well enough: nevertheless the ocean has many gems, and doubtless each thinks itself the best: but the Koustubha [3] is above them all.

Then a cloud came over her face, and she flung away from him in disdain, and stood pouting like a child. And suddenly she turned again, and put up to her head the graceful creepers of her round arms, and undid the knot of her hair, and shook it. And it fell, like midnight, about those stars her eyes, and wrapped her all over like a veil, and rolled down round her feet and along the ground, like a black serpent. Then with her hand she put it away from her face, and shot through its meshes a subtle smile, and said: At least thou hast never seen the equal of my hair? And Umra-Singh felt her glance strike him like a thunderbolt out of a cloud. And he said to himself: Well may she ask; and now, if my soul were not already snared in the long lashes of the eyes of Shrí, it would be netted like a quail in this extraordinary mass of never-ending hair. But

[1] A reminiscence of Bhartrihari.

[2] Nothing can translate *bálá*. It means child, woman, beauty, *beauté-de-diable*.

[3] Wishnu's great breast-jewel (*Kou* as *cow*).

he said: Beauty, lovely at night is the heaven with its stars, but lovelier still the dark blue sea, in which they are reflected, for it contains all their beauty and adds another of its own.

Then Ulupí was very angry, and she stood with flashing eyes, swelling with rage. And suddenly she stooped, and gathered up her hair in her arm, and came up to Umra-Singh, and flung it round him like a noose, and whispered in his ear, with lips that caressed it as they moved: O foolish bee,[1] I am but a lotus of the night: yet why despise me, in comparison with the absent lotus of the day? It is hot and dusty, and I am cool and fragrant as the nectar of that moon in whose light I blow. And Umra-Singh trembled. For there came from her hair a strange wind, like a cloud of the sweet of a thousand scents, that lured his soul to listen and dream in the lulling murmur of her mouth. And as he closed his eyes for fear, he saw before him the blue scorn in the eyes of Shrí, and the sound of her laughter and the noise of the drums and the voices of the criers boomed in his ear, and drowned Ulupí's spell. And he shook himself free from her hair, and said: Beauty, I am a Rajpoot of the race of the Sun: what have I to do with a lotus of the moon?

[1] This word here used may mean either a *bee* or a *lover* or a *wanderer* (*bhramara*).

Then Ulupí screamed, like a wounded elephant. And she seized him by the arm and shook him violently, and exclaimed: Hast thou a stone within thy breast, instead of a heart, that my beauty cannot touch thee? For I know that I am beautiful, and there is not beauty like mine in the three worlds. And Umra-Singh looked at her, and wondered, for her fury made her more lovely than before. And he said: O daughter of a Daitya, thou speakest the truth: yet a vessel that is full can hold no more, be the liquor what it may, and such is my heart. Let me now pass by thee, as undeserving thy regard: for I am bound for the Land of the Lotus of the Sun. Then said Ulupí, with a stamp of her foot: Fool! thou shalt never see that Lotus Land.

And she looked at him with a jeering laugh: and instantly she sat down, and wound herself up in her long hair, and began to weep. And as she wept, the tears ran down from her eyes like a river, and fell into the lake. Immediately the lake began to rise and swell, and flood the wood with water. And as Umra-Singh stood gazing at her with astonishment, he found himself standing in a vast marsh, with the trees of the forest for rushes. And he looked, and lo! suddenly that delusive daughter of a Daitya became a mist, and floated away over the water like vapour.

And Umra-Singh heard her laughter dying away in the distance as she went, and he was left alone in the wood, with the water up to his waist.

VII

THE SILVER SWANS

And as the water kept on rising, rising, Umra-Singh said to himself: Extraordinary is the guile of women, and copious their tears, but this daughter of a Daitya surely surpasses them all. For who ever heard of tears that, like rivers, could flood a quarter of the world? But in the meanwhile, before I find my death in these rising waters, it is better to take refuge in a tree. So he climbed up into a tree, and looked out over the water, on which the mist hung in the moonlight like a curtain of silver on a floor of lapis-lazuli. And he said to himself: Is this merely an illusion, or rather, is not this wood well named, being in very truth the matted hair of the great god, with these trees for hairs, and this water for the Ganges that wanders among them,[1] and yonder moon the very ornament of the moon-

[1] The Ganges fell from heaven, and Shiwa caught it on his head, where it wandered in his hair for a thousand years before it could find its way down. A legend which doubtless has reference to the vast plateaux of the Himálaya and Tibet.

crested god. But this water goes on rising, and I must ascend higher into the tree.

So he climbed up, and up, and as he climbed, the water rose after him, higher and higher, until at last he could see nothing but the water, and the moon, and the tree that stretched away above him into the sky. And as he went, he said to himself: Up I must go, for there is no other resource: and now, unless like the husband of Shrí,[1] I could save myself on the back of a tortoise from this very sea of water, I must surely be destroyed. For unless this extraordinary tree has no top, I must presently reach it, and meet with my death at the same time. And even without the water, as to how I am to get down again, I have not an idea. So he continued to climb and climb, while the water rose, and the moon sank, and the night gradually came to an end.

And then the sun rose over the eastern mountain, and began like himself to climb up into the sky. And the sweat poured from his limbs, and at last he stopped, overcome with fatigue. And he said to himself: Now I can go no further. Since I must now in any case perish, why should

[1] He compares himself to the husband of the other Shrí, *i. e.*, the Goddess of Beauty, or Wishnu, whose second incarnation was that of a tortoise.

I go on climbing in vain? For surely I am on the very roof of the world, and alone with the sun in the sky.

And as he looked down, suddenly he saw before him no water and no tree, and his head grew dizzy, and his vision swam, and he could scarcely believe his eyes.

For he stood on the peak of a high mountain, in the very zenith of the sky. And all round him, and all before him, and behind him, was a vast desert of burning sand, that stretched away to the very limit of the range of sight, and on its edges rested the quarters of heaven. And it glowed in the fire of the sun's rays like a furnace, and was furrowed and pitted with holes and chasms; and its surface rose and fell, as he watched it, like a woman's breast, and it looked as if it were alive, though it was in truth the home of death. And as he gazed, he saw, how over it there crawled swiftly living things with pointed tails, of the colour of sand, which entered the desert by the holes, and issued from them, and at length stood still, and became invisible, save that their tails never rested, and their bright eyes stood out of the sand, to watch. And it seemed to Umra-Singh, in the loneliness of that vast solitude, that all those hideous eyes sought him out, and fastened on him, and rested on him alone,

saying to him as it were: Thou canst not escape.

And then he said to himself: Now there is indeed no help for me, and beyond a doubt, my end has come. For to remain here is impossible, and equally certain the death that lies, either in going forward or going back. And yet I could wish to die, if at all, not in the presence of eyes such as these, but in the colour of the eyes of Shrí. Yet how shall I escape the vigilance of yonder dreadful Dwellers in the Sand, wading with difficulty in its substance that will sink under my feet like the waves of the sea, but over which they scud like the shadow of a cloud.

So all day he remained on that high place, not daring to descend. And then at length the sun went to his rest in the western quarter, and the moon rose, and was reflected in the bright eyes of those sand-haunting Rákshasas, which glittered in the distance on the dark desert like drops of water on the leaf of a black lotus. And all night long Umra-Singh lay and watched them, as a bird watches the eyes of a snake.

Then in the early dawn he looked, and as the light of morning began to glimmer in the distance on the edge of the world, he saw far away in the pale air two dark specks in the sky. And as he gazed, they grew larger and rapidly approached

him, sending back to him, like mirrors, the red rays of the rising sun. And they drew nearer, and he saw that they were a pair of silver Swans, carrying in their bills the dead body of a third, of gold. So these two Swans crossed over that dreadful desert with the rapidity of the lightning that resembled them, and settled beside him on the hill, to rest.

Then said Umra-Singh: Hail! ye fair birds: surely ye are no birds, but deities, fallen into these bodies of swans by reason of a curse. Whence come ye, and whither go ye, and what is this dead golden body that ye carry as ye go? Then said the Swans: We are carrying home the body of our king, far away to the Mánasa lake. For he died yesterday, in the Land of the Lotus of the Sun. And now we must bear him ever onward swiftly to his own country, that the funeral ceremonies may duly be performed.

But when Umra-Singh heard them name the Land of the Lotus, his heart leaped in his breast. And sword in hand, he rushed on the dead body with a shout. And he said to the Swans: As you carried him hither from that Land of the Lotus of the Sun, so swear now, that you will carry me first back thither, leaving him here till you return: otherwise I will keep him, and cut you to pieces.

Then seeing that there was no help for it, the

Swans said; Be it so: and they bound themselves to him by an oath. And then Umra-Singh took hold of them by the neck, one in each hand; and they stretched out their necks, and flew away with him over the desert as he hung. And he left far behind him the eyes of those hideous Rákshasas glowing in the sand as if with rage to see him escape: and after a long while, they came to the edge of the desert. And Umra-Singh looked down and saw, far below him, the blue sea, shimmering like the eyes of Shrí. And at a distance in the water, like a dusky jewel on a purple carpet, he saw an island, with a city on it. So he said to the Swans; What is that which I see below me? And they said: It is the Land of the Lotus of the Sun.

Then in his delight, Umra-Singh let go his hold, and clapped his hands. And instantly he fell down like a stone into the sea. But the Swans returned swiftly over the desert to the body which they had left upon the hill.

VIII

THE LAND OF THE LOTUS

But Umra-Singh rose out of the water like a fowl, and saw the Land of the Lotus away on the sea before him. And he shouted for joy, and began to swim in that direction. And he swam

on all day, and at last, though with difficulty, he reached the shore, when his strength was almost gone. And he crept up out of the water, as the sun was going down; and overcome with weariness, he lay down, there where he came up out of the sea, and fell asleep. And all night long he slept, and all day; and when the moon had risen again, full and round, as if to see whether he was still there, he awoke.

And then he stood up, and rubbed his eyes, and exclaimed: Ha! now I am at my journey's end, and all its dangers are gone like dreams And this is that wonderful Land of the Lotus of the Sun, of which no one in Indirálayá had ever heard! So now that I am here, what remains for me to do, but to leave it, and go back again as quickly as possible. For I desired to find it, only to say that I had been there. And yet when I return, who will believe me? It were better, now that I am here, to examine it, and learn its peculiarities, that I may not twice meet with the treatment due to impostors.

So he went up from the shore, and through the streets of the city, that lay before him, black and white, in the rays of the silver moon. And he met nobody, but it was empty, and dark as a barren womb, and silent as a stone incarnation of the spirit of death. And as he wandered up and

down, he came at last to a great palace, whose doors stood wide open, as much as to say: Come in. So he went in, and passed along, wondering, with echoing steps, from room to room. Then on a sudden he entered a door, and found himself in a vast hall, whose walls were pierced with tall windows, through which the moonlight fell, cold as camphor, on moonstones that hung in clusters from the roof. And from them the nectar fell slowly, drop by drop, upon the floor. And at the far end of the room, on a golden couch, he saw lying a dead body, covered with a white pall.

Then he said to himself: What is this wonder, and who can it be that lies here, alone in this empty hall? And he moved on slowly, through the lights of the windows and the shadows of the walls, till he came up to the end of the hall, and stood beside the couch. And he stooped down, and lifted up the edge of the pall, and uncovered the face, and looked, and lo! it was the face of Shrí.

And Umra-Singh was so astounded, that he leaped into the air, and uttered a cry: and he let his sword fall with a crash upon the crystal floor. And he said to himself: Is it a dream, or is it an illusion? Lo! I left her living in Indirálayá, and I have travelled over the three worlds, and here

at the end of space I find her again, lying dead in this empty hall!

So he stood, like a picture on a wall, gazing in silence at the face of Shrí, while the night wore away, and the moon travelled on, and the nectar from the moonstones fell slowly, drop by drop, upon the ground, and the shadows moved round upon the floor. And at last, after a long while, he came to himself. And he let the pall fall from his hand, recovering the face. And he stooped down, and took up his sword, and went slowly out of that strange hall, and sat down on the steps of a marble tank, and fell into a waking dream. And as he gazed into vacancy, he saw before him the blue ocean of the eyes of Shrí; and his memory echoed with faint murmurs of the sound of drums and the voices of criers; and they filled his soul with whispers coming from an infinite distance across the years of separation, until at length the sun rose.

Then Umra-Singh rose up also, and he struck his forehead with his hand. And he exclaimed: I cannot tell, whether it is reality, or whether it is a dream. But this I know, that now I must get back without delay to Indirálayá, and cross, somehow or other, over that sea, and that terrible desert, and through that hideous wood, and tell my story to the King, and claim my bride. But

first I will bathe in yonder pool: for my heart is heavy, and my head aches, for all that I have endured during the night, and all that I have seen.

And he went down the steps, and plunged into the waters of the pool.

IX

RECOGNITION

And as he rose from the water, there rang in his ears, loud and clear, the sound of the beating of drums. And he listened, and heard the criers crying: *Whatsoever high-caste man has been to the Land of the Lotus of the Sun, let him come to the King: he shall share the King's kingdom, and marry the King's daughter.* And he looked round. Lo! he was standing in that very tank in Indirálayá, from which he had started, years before, to find the Land of the Lotus of the Sun. Then in his amazement, his flesh crept, and his hair stood on end. And he stood in the pool like a pillar of stone, with the water streaming from his body, and doubt bewildering his soul. And he said to himself: Is it indeed reality, or is it a dream? And what has become of the Land of the Lotus, and all my toil? For here I am in Indirálayá, and there are the very criers whom I left

behind me, crying, and beating, just as they did before, their drums!

And then suddenly he uttered a shout, and exclaimed: Well, now I will go to the King, for the time has come to claim the reward. And he leaped out of the water, and ran up the steps like one that is mad, and went up to the criers, and said to them: Cease this useless crying, and this empty beating of drums, and take me quickly to the King, for I have seen that Lotus Land. And the criers did not recognise him, but they were full of joy at hearing his words: for their crying had made them weary of life. So as they were preparing to take him to the King, he clapped his hands, and said again: Quick! delay not! but make haste, great haste! or else my heart will break. For I endured separation, when union seemed at a distance, with ease: but now that the moment of reunion approaches, my heart is breaking: every moment seems an age: and if you delay long, I cannot endure. Then the criers made great haste, and brought him as quickly as possible to the King.

But when the King saw Umra-Singh, he looked at him narrowly, and knew him again, for all that he was changed. And he said to himself: Surely this is that very rogue, who came to me before to cheat me; and now, here he is again! And he

said to Umra-Singh: I know thee, thou impostor. Beware! for this time thou shalt not escape. Then said Umra-Singh: King, be it as thou wilt. Only let me see thy daughter, and that quickly: for I have really seen that Lotus Land: thereafter deal with me as it may please thee best. And as he spoke, ungovernable impatience seized him: and he stamped his foot upon the ground, and tears came into his eyes, and suddenly he began to laugh. And the King looked at him with curiosity, and wondered at him: and he said to himself: Either this fellow is mad, or it is as he says, and he has really seen that Lotus Land. But he said again to Umra-Singh: Remember, if this time also thou art playing false, death is the reward. Umra-Singh said: Show me thy daughter, and put me then to any kind of death. So the King sent for his daughter, and after a while, Shrí came in.

But when Umra-Singh saw her enter, he sobbed aloud, and strode towards her. And as she turned her eyes on him in fear, he plunged his fainting soul into their azure sea. And in an instant he forgot his journey and his toil, and obtained in that moment the nectar of emancipation from the hunger of longing, and the pain of separation, and the terror of untimely death. And Shrí looked at him, as he stood before her,

and instantly she knew him again. And her heart beat in her bosom like a drum, and she was seized with trembling, and could not speak, for fear and doubt. For again the forgotten ties of her former birth fought for utterance in her soul, and yet she feared him for his insolence, and despised him for his poverty: for he was ten times leaner and more ragged than before. And long she looked at him without speaking. And then at last she found her voice, and spoke, and said slowly: What! is it thou, most doughty traveller? And hast thou made another story? Good it had better be, thy second tale, for never shalt thou live to make a third.

But Umra-Singh leaned towards her, with hungry eyes, for his soul yearned for the repetition of a forgotten past. And he looked at her long and wistfully, till her glance quailed, for her spirit was mastered by his courage and his love. And twice he strove to speak, and twice he failed, while great tears fell from his eyes upon the ground. And then at last, he became master of himself. And said he: Dear, now use me as thou wilt, and put me to any death. But tell me first, before I die: How comes it that I see thee here alive, and yet I saw thee, in that Lotus City, lying dead upon a couch, in the cold rays of the moon?

Then Shrí threw up her arms with a shriek. And she cried out: Ha! it is the truth: this man has really seen the Land of the Lotus of the Sun. And suddenly, the veil of oblivion was drawn for an instant, and she caught a glimpse of her former birth, and knew her husband again. And instantly she ran to him, and threw herself into his arms, and hung on his breast, and clung to him, like a jasmine creeper on a noble tree. And tears fell from her eyes like rain, and she laughed for joy, and caressed his face with her hand, and said: Brave heart, and didst thou dare to go alone to that distant Lotus Land? Thou art indeed my own husband, in this life as in the last. And now, after long separation, I have found thee for an instant, and thou hast me. Only seek as well again, and we shall meet once more, and taste yet another drop of the nectar of mutual enjoyment, before we die; for so it is decreed. I say, remember: we shall meet again.

Then she stood up, and pushed him back, so violently, that he nearly fell. And all they that stood by watched her and wondered. For as they gazed, she grew in beauty, like a waxing moon, and flashed like a great jewel, and dazzled the eyes of all like the brightness of a lamp: and the colour of her wondrous eyes shot from them and streamed about the room, and lit up its walls

with glory like that of a setting sun. And seeing it, the King her father was full of joy, for he thought: Now she is going to be married, and I have attained the fruit of my birth. But the astrologers looked at each other in dismay, for they knew that she was about to die. So as they gazed, suddenly she dropped and fell, and lay before them on the floor, like a lotus smitten by the frost.

Then the astrologers said, gloomily: She has abandoned the body, and gone somewhere else. And the King, seeing her fall, and hearing them speak, lost his senses, and fell down beside her in a swoon. But Umra-Singh turned, and left the palace, and went out into the street.

X

SEPARATION

And he reeled about like a drunken man, this way and that way, jostling the people, who marvelled and mocked at him: See, see, the ragged Rajpoot, the suitor of the King's daughter, whose very sight has killed her! But he heard nothing but the words of Shrí, and saw nothing but her eyes. And he staggered on, like a wooden doll, on feet that moved of their own accord, till as before he reached the tank, and sank down upon the

ground, knowing neither where he was nor what he did, puzzled about the quarters of the world.[1] And like a man, out of whose universe the sun and moon and the five elements with their compounds have withdrawn, leaving him alone in the centre of empty space, he lay motionless, plunged in stupor, with dry eyes. Then all at once memory returned to him, and he began to weep. And he wept, as if he contained within him the very fountains of the salt sea, till at last from weariness and grief he fell asleep on the edge of the tank. And in his dreams Shrí stood beside him, and revived his parched soul with the nectar of her kindly glance, as a hermit's daughter refreshes with water the plants of the hermitage committed to her charge.

And after drinking deep draughts from those two fountains of pity and love, he awoke, and found that it was now night, and again he was alone at the moonlit tank. And he said to himself; Alas! alas! I found my bride, and lost her again at the same instant, through the terrible operation of sins committed in a former birth. Now indeed I am alone, for this time she is gone I know not where, and how am I to look for her? And yet she told me we should meet again, to keep me from despair. Therefore now I will

[1] *Dinmohita = desorienté.*

wander away over the wide world, and spend my life in seeking her: for but this, nothing is left in life, and the hope of reunion is like the back of the Great Tortoise, my solitary refuge in the wreck of the three worlds.

So he rose up, and went out of the city, and wandered about, hither and thither, like a bubble on the waves of time. And he went from village to village, and from city to city, asking everywhere of all whom he met: Have you seen Shrí, my wife? you will know her by her eyes, for they are full of the colour of heaven. But however much he asked, he found no answer: nor could any one tell him anything about her. On the contrary, all wondered at him and turned him to ridicule. And one would say: Who is this moon-struck vagabond who roams about looking for a blue-eyed beauty? And another: What wonder that Shrí has deserted such a ragged mendicant, who forsakes even the well-to-do! And others said: This distracted Rajpoot wants the moon, but he needs medicines.[1] And at last he abandoned altogether the dwellings of men, and wandered continually in the jungle, with no companions but his shadow and his sword, looking in vain for

[1] The point of these gibes depends on the various meanings of the word Shrí: which may mean his wife, or the goddess of fortune, or the moon: out of which come herbs or medicines.

the path by which he had gone on his former journey to the Land of the Lotus, and gazing by day at the pools of blue lotuses, and by night at the heaven with its stars, for they were like mirrors and images of the hues and shadows of the eyes of Shrí.

XI

THE LORD OF THE BEASTS

Now in the meanwhile it happened that Maheshwara, as he roamed through the sky with Párwati on his breast, looked down to earth, and caught sight of Umra-Singh wandering in the forest, uttering lamentations, and exclaiming: O Shrí, where art thou hiding? Hast thou, like the desert, no pity for the antelope that is dying of thirst for the water of thine eyes?[1] And immediately he remembered his boon to Kamalamitra, and grasped the whole story from beginning to end. So he said to Umá with a smile: Go now to thy father,[2] and wait for me: for there is here a matter that demands my attention. Then his consort said to him in a cajoling tone: What is

[1] There is here an untranslatable play on the word *mrigatrishná*, "the thirst of the antelope," *i. e.*, the *mirage* of the desert, to which he compares her eyes.

[2] *I. e.*, the Himálaya mountain, of which, or rather of whom, Párwati is the daughter, as her name signifies.

the matter? tell me. Maheshwara said: I will tell thee afterwards: at present I have no leisure: depart. Thereupon the goddess went off pouting to the Snowy Mountain. But the moon-crested god descended to earth. And there, taking the form of an ascetic, he entered the forest. And standing in its densest part, his body white with ashes, garlanded with a necklace of skulls, with a half-moon in his yellow hair, he created by his supernatural power a gong, hanging from a banyan tree in the centre of the wood. And he struck with his trident a blow on that mind-born gong that resounded through the forest like thunder.

Then instantly, hearing that terrible summons, all the denizens of the wood, Yakshas and Pisháchas, Rákshasas and Hamadryads, with the wild animals and the rest, assembled together and flew towards the sound, and crowded around the gong like flies or bees to honey or a dead body. And when they had mustered, they enquired humbly of that Lord of Creatures animate and inanimate: What orders has the Lord of All for his servants, and why are we now summoned? Then said the Great Ascetic: There is in this wood a lover looking for his bride. And she on her part will sometime or other be here to join him. See that none of you do them actual harm,

by devouring or destroying them: for they are to work out their redemption in the wood, by the decree of destiny and my will and pleasure.[1] For they fell under a curse, and so became mortals: but when they meet here, and the circumstances are favourable, their curse will have an end. Therefore delude them if you will, but beware that you touch not a hair of their heads.

Thus he spoke, and all assented, prostrating themselves at his feet. And then he began to dance. Then all joined furiously in the festival of his favour, seized with the madness born of devotion, uttering ecstatic hymns of praise, each in his own language. So after that he had sported sufficiently, and bestowed on those adorers the nectar of his presence, that Lord whose left half is his wife remembered his promise to the Daughter of the Mountain, and returned to the snowy peak of Kailàs, to tell her the story and coax away her sulks.

XII

THE OTHER BODY

But in the meanwhile Shrí,[2] when she abandoned the body in Indirálayá, flew in the twinkling of an eye to the Land of the Lotus of the Sun. And there she entered that other body, lying in

[1] The Hindoos never had a Lucian, to laugh at their mythological contradictions. They were always too much under the spell.

[2] See note, p. 245.

a couch in the Palace hall. Then instantly she opened her eyes, and rose up, as if awaking from a dream. And she was filled with astonishment, terror, and dismay, when she found herself alone in the empty hall. And she exclaimed: Alas! what is this mystery, and how came I into this deserted hall, and in which quarter of the world am I, and what has become of my husband? Now do I see the terrible consequences of sins committed in a former birth. Alas! how am I to regain him, and where is he to be found? Surely we are like two tiny fishes in the infinite ocean of time. Yet even so, despair is unavailing. Did not Sítá recover Ráma, and Shakuntalá, Dushyanta, and Damayanti cross the ocean of separation and repose on the shore in the shape of the embraces of Nala? Truly omnipotent is the power of love, and what love was ever greater than mine? For it passes on from body to body, and draws fresh fire from each new birth.

Then she dressed herself in the white pall,[1] and

[1] As this might sound bizarre to the English reader, accustomed to the elaborate toilettes of Western ladies, he should know that nothing can be more simple than the dress of a Hindoo woman. A single long piece of stuff, wound like a petticoat round the waist, secured, and thrown over the head to form a veil, forms a garment that the Greeks might have envied. Nothing can surpass the taste, beauty, and grace of the way in which it follows and reveals without betraying the figure of its wearer.

went hastily out of that empty palace, shrinking like a fawn at the echo of her own footsteps, and passed out of the gates, and ran through the deserted streets, down to the very edge of the sea. And there she stood with her bare feet lapped by the waves, looking out eagerly over the sea, with eyes that laughed at and shamed it of its blue. And it rose in agitation at her beauty, as if stirred by the moon, while the wind kissed her unaware, and played with her hair and clothes. Then she said: O Ocean, art thou too parted from some one, that thou heavest long drawn sighs? Art thou also wrenched with grief, that thou sprinklest me with the salt tears of thy spray?

And as she gazed, there appeared tossing on the waves a ship, like the realisation of her desire to cross the ocean in visible form. Now that ship belonged to a great merchant captain, who was returning home from a trading voyage. And when he saw a female figure standing alone on the shore, he came quickly in a boat to take her captive. But when he got to the shore, and saw the wonderful beauty of her dark blue eyes and snow white raiment, he was struck with wonder, and became afraid. And he said to her in awe: Surely thou art some divinity, and no mere mortal maiden. Tell me thy name, that I may know whom to

adore. Then said Shrí: Sir, I am no divinity, but a King's daughter; and I am seeking for my husband. Carry me, of your kindness, over the sea, for I must find my way to Indirálayá. But hearing this, that merchant was overjoyed; for he thought: Indirálayá is in another quarter of the world, and I will be her husband. For he was drowned in the ocean of her eyes. So he said to her: O thou true daughter of a King, my ship is thine and all that it contains. Come now, and I will carry thee whithersoever thou wilt. So Shrí consented. And the merchant in his delight counted the whole world as a straw, thinking he had got her for a wife.

So when he got to the ship, he said to her: Truly this husband of thine is a sorry rascal. Out upon him, who could leave such an incomparable beauty as thine to roam about the world without him! Forget him now, for I will be thy husband. Then said Shrí: This is impiety, nor is my husband to blame in this matter. Know, too, that to a good wife her husband is a deity. Then said the merchant: Thou shalt marry me whether thou wilt or not: and I care nothing for piety or impiety, but only for thy wonderful eyes And now I have thee, I will keep thee. So he carried her in his ship, very carefully, closely guarded, to his own city, and shut her in

an upper chamber of his house, hoping to prevail on her in course of time, neglecting his affairs.

Then Shrí said to herself: Alas for my beauty, which is a curse and no blessing to me, in that it has placed me in the power of this headstrong merchant! Nevertheless, even so, I have got over the sea. And now, I must lose no time in escaping from this infatuated sinner, or worse things may come about. And she went to the window and looked out. Now by the ordinance of fate it so happened, that at that moment the King of that city was passing by on his elephant. So when she saw it, Shrí said to herself: There is my deliverance in the form of an elephant. And now I must sin a little, to save myself from greater guilt. Then she called to the *mahout:* Come nearer, O driver of the elephant: for I am anxious to taste the delight of riding on an elephant. And hearing this, the *mahout* looked at the King. And the King looked at the face of Shrí. And Shrí shot at the King a blue glance from her eye. And instantly the King lost his senses, and said to the *mahout:* Do as she bids thee. So the *mahout* brought the elephant under the window, and Shrí let herself fall from the window on to his back. And she caught hold of the King to save herself from falling, and the King almost fainted from excess of joy, and the nectar of her

touch. And without losing a moment, he carried her off to his palace, as delighted as if he had conquered the whole earth. But the merchant, when he found that she had gone, abandoned the body in his despair.

Then as soon as they reached the palace, the King said to Shrí: What is thy name and family? Shrí said: I am a King's daughter from a far country, and my name is Shrí. Then said the King: Thou didst well to forsake that miserable trader for me. Should the lioness, forsooth! mate with the jackal? And now will I place thee, like a choice jewel, in the centre of my diadem, and thou shalt be the very apex of the summit of my fortune.[1] Then said Shrí: King, do not speak thus. For I am the wife of another. And I fled to thee for refuge, and not for frivolity: for yonder merchant would have made me his wife by force. So do me justice, and let me go: for I may not be a wife to thee.

Then said the King: Thy dark blue eyes have utterly destroyed my sense of right and wrong, which are now mere words without meaning, impotent to hold me as is a lotus stalk to fetter that elephant which brought thee hither; and in vain

[1] He plays on her name. The old Hindoo rájás had the same veneration for their royal fortune (*Shrí*) as the Romans for their *Fors Fortuna*.

dost thou talk to me of letting thee go: thou askest me for my life: for till I saw those unfathomable blue lakes which thou hast stolen to make thee eyes, I never lived. Only consent, and I will efface by my devotion the memory of thy husband, as the sun dries up a shallow pool. But Shrí said: Say not pool, but ocean, on which the sun shines for ever, yet never makes it any less: for such is my love to my husband. But the King paid no heed to her words, which entered at his ear, but never reached his mind. For all his soul was in his eyes, feasting on the face of Shrí, which made him drunk like the juice of Soma.[1]

Then seeing the state of the case, Shrí said to herself: Alas! I have escaped the lesser danger only to incur the greater, and become the prey of this unrighteous King. Now there is no help for me, save in stratagem, and the natural craft of woman. And she lifted up her lashes, and cast on the King a crooked glance, that almost deprived him of his reason. And she said, moving her bow-arched eyebrows, with a smile: Out upon the heart of woman, for it is soft as a flower, and averse to constancy! Leave me awhile, for I must consider this matter. And yet, stay not

[1] A play on her name, as a digit of the moon: Soma is the moon, and the famous intoxicant of the early Hindoos.

away too long, for thou art good to look upon, and well-fitted to be my husband, were I not already the wife of another man. But hearing this, the King was utterly bewildered, and doubted the testimony of his ears. And he thought: Now she will consent, after a little coaxing. And he looked at her as she stood smiling at him, bowing like a flower from the weight of her bosom and the slenderness of her waist, and laughed in his intoxication, befooled by the roundness of her limbs and the blueness of her eyes, and forgetting that the Creator made woman to be an instrument of delusion, with an exterior of honey and an interior of poison. And he left her to perform his kingly duties, intending to return without delay, and thinking the fruit of his birth attained.

But as soon as he was gone, Shrí summoned a chamberlain, and said to him: Take me to the Head Queen, and lose not a moment, or it will be the worse for thee. And that chamberlain trembled and obeyed her, for he feared her power, saying to himself: The King would throw his kingdom into the sea for a glance from her eye, and now my life is on her forefinger. So when Shrí came before the Queen, she said to her: Lady, thou art my sole refuge. Know, that the King thy husband found me to-day in the city, and stole me away, seeking to make me his wife.

Now contrive my escape, for I am the wife of another, and I may not be his wife. And do it very quickly, for this is an opportunity which will never occur again. Then the Queen looked at her, and said to herself: She says well, and I must indeed send her away without losing a moment. For if she remains here, and becomes his wife, the King will abandon everything for her sake, and the state will go to ruin. Moreover, he will never again have anything to do with me or any other of his queens: for her beauty is like a very feminine incarnation of the five arrows of the god of love.

So she summoned her confidential women; and they disguised Shrí as a dancing girl, and conveyed her secretly out of the palace without delay. But when the King returned, and found that she was gone, he became mad. And he put to death, of his retainers, everything that was male.

XIII

A LIGHT IN DARKNESS

But Shrí, when she got out of the palace, instantly went out of the city by unfrequented paths, and entered the Great Forest. For she said to herself: If I remain in the city, I may fall again into the power of the King, or, it may be,

of some one still worse. For alas! every man that sees me is blinded by my eyes, and I shall not always find a door of escape from persecution. Moreover, to beauty without its guardian, wild beasts are less dangerous than men with souls through the influence of passions worse than those of beasts. Better far to be devoured by an animal, than become perforce the wife of another man.

So she went on through the forest for many days, supporting her life on roots and fruits and the water of the pools and streams. And she tore her clothes to pieces in the bushes, and pierced her feet with their thorns, leaving where she passed on the grass drops of blood, like rubies, mingled with the pearls of her tears that fell beside them, as often as she thought of her absent husband. And the deeper she went into the wood, the more her spirit sank, and the more her soul longed for the nectar of her husband's arms. Alas! the courage of women is but a pale and lunar image in the mirror of that of men, and vanishes in their absence. And at last there came a day when she was seized with panic, and a fear of unknown evil: and she sank down at the foot of a tree, and watered its root with her tears.

Now it happened, that some Bhillas, hunting, by the decree of destiny, in the forest, came upon

her track, and saw the drops of blood upon the leaves. And they followed them up, saying to themselves: Some wounded animal has passed this way. So as they came along, every now and then they stopped and listened. And suddenly, they heard the sound of the voice of a woman, weeping in the wood. Then full of astonishment, they proceeded in the direction of the sound: and all at once they saw Shrí, sitting under a tree, looking like an incarnation of Rati grieving for her husband, when burned by Maheshwara.[1] For her clothes were torn, and her hair was dishevelled and her great eyes filled with tears resembled the petals of a blue lotus sparkling with drops of water cast upon them by the sporting of swans in a pool. So those wild Bhillas wondered when they saw her, and said to each other: What is this marvel of a dancing girl, so ragged and so beautiful, weeping alone in the wood? And then they went up to her and stood round her in a ring. And she looked in the midst of those black barbarians like a digit of the moon in the jaws of Ráhu. Then after a while the spell of her beauty entered and poisoned the hearts of those Bhillas, like one of their own arrows. And each one said secretly to himself: She shall be my wife. So they debated about

[1] See note 4, p. 234.

her, and proposed to each other to draw lots for her. But they could not agree about it, and fell to quarrelling, and it was as if a stone had been dropped into a nest of serpents.

Then one laid hands upon her, and then another, till she was nearly torn in pieces. And finally they came to blows, and fought for her over her body, filled by the frenzy begotten by her beauty, and the desire of exclusive possession.[1] And very soon they were all either dead or dying of wounds, for each was more eager to destroy another than to protect himself: and they lay all about her unable to move. Then Shrí, seizing her opportunity, and urged by terror, rose up and fled away from them, being sprinkled by their blood, mingled with her own, for she had received in the struggle a blow from a Bhilla that was meant for another. And she ran on, stumbling over roots and creepers in her haste, till she came at last to a forest pool. And there she lay down at the edge of the water and drank greedily; and afterwards washed her wound and stains, and bathed her feet, and overcome by weariness, fell asleep. Then the moon rose, and stole through the trees and kissed her with beams that trembled with admiration;[2] and the wild

[1] *Ahamahamiká*, "each one saying I, I."

[2] The Moon proper, in Sanskrit, is *Lunus*, not *Luna*.

animals came down, one by one, to drink at the pool, and obedient to the commands of Triambaka, did her no harm, but licked her feet and hands as she lay.

Now, as fate would have it, this was the very pool, at which Umra-Singh had met with Ulupí, the daughter of the Daitya. And in course of the night, Ulupí came herself to the pool, to dance and sport according to her wont. And when she arrived, she saw Shrí, lying asleep by the pool. So she came and stood over her, and marvelled at the beauty of her limbs, even though her eyes were shut. And at last, out of curiosity, she touched her on the bosom with her finger, saying to herself: Is this an illusion, or is it a real woman, and is she dead or alive? But Shrí shuddered at her touch, for it suggested evil to her sleeping soul. And she opened her eyes, and their deep blue awoke the envy of the daughter of the Daitya, and astonished her even more than before.

Then they looked at each other, like light and darkness, and each wondered at the loveliness of the other, forgetful of her own. And at last Ulupí said: Who art thou, and what is thy name and family, and whence hast thou come to my pool, and why? Shrí said: I am a King's daughter, looking for my husband, whom I lost, by the

operation of crimes in a former birth, at the very moment that I found him again, after that he had returned to me from the Land of the Lotus of the Sun. But when Ulupí heard her, she was filled with sudden rage and malice. And she said to herself: Ha! so this is that absent lotus of the day, by reason of whom my beauty was scorned, and set at nought by the handsome stranger who saw me dancing by my pool. And instantly she started up, and assuming a terrific form, she gnashed at Shrí with teeth like saws, and made horrible grimaces at her, saying: Wretch, thou shalt never quit this wood, but wander for ever with thy accursed beauty among its trees, haunted and beset by hideous illusions till thou shalt long for death. Let thy absent hu band save thee if he can. And she vanished with a peal of laughter, leaving Shrí fainting by the pool

But Ulupí flew through the wood, and found Nightwalker, the old Wairágí, and told him all, and begged of him a boon, saying: Torment this miserable mortal woman, and deceive her with illusions for she has done me deadly injury. And Nightwalker rejoiced at the opportunity, for he remembered how Umra-Singh had defied him, and cut off his tongue in the wood. But he said: This is no easy matter, for we are forbidden by

Pashupati to do her harm. But though I will do her no injury, I will delude this wandering wife of a vile husband, till she will desire to abandon the body of her own accord.

XIV

ILLUSION

But Shrí, when she came to herself, sat weeping, and fearing for herself in the future: for she foreboded evil from the malicious pranks of the daughter of the Daitya. And yet she could not tell, how she could possibly have offended her, or deserved her anger. And as soon as day broke, she rose up, and began to go trembling through the wood, in which the shadows of night still hung among the trees, starting at the noise of the falling leaves, and yearning for emancipation from danger in the form of her husband's presence.

Then after a while, she stopped and listened: for she heard among the trees steps, as of one coming in her direction. And her hea t beat violently, as if to say: Let me abandon thy body, and so escape the danger coming on thee. So she hid herself in a hollow tree, and peeped out in terror. And suddenly, strange! there in the dim twilight she saw her husband coming towards her, looking just as he did, when she left him in the palace at Indirálayá. And instantly she ran towards him,

overcome by emotion and great surprise, and caught him in her arms, exclaiming: At last, at last, I have found thee again. And she wept aloud, and forgot in that moment all her sorrow; and she looked at him, and laughed for joy, and closed her eyes, as if, like the sun, the sight of him dimmed and overcame the faculty of vision. Then after a while, she opened them again, and started and shrieked, and her blood became ice, and her heart stopped. For he that held her in his arms was not her husband, but a hairy thing with hideous eyes, that resembled an incarnation of the brute in human shape; and it fastened those fearful eyes upon her own, and laughed and whined and panted like a beast with hot quick breath into her face. Then her senses abandoned her, like cowards, and she sank down to the earth in a swoon.

And when at length she revived, she looked, and saw that the sun was declining in the western quarter. But the moon had not yet risen, for it was the beginning of the dark half of the month. Then all at once memory came back to her, and she shook with agitation. And she said to herself: Was it a reality, or was it only an evil dream? Surely it was but a dream; for I am very weak and tired. And even now I cannot tell, whether I wake or sleep.

So she sat with her eyes closed; fearing to open them, lest she should see she knew not what among the shadows of the trees. And then the waning moon rose, and poured through the interstices of the leaves beams faint and pallid, as if sharing her own terror. And at last, unable to endure any longer the silence and the solitude, she rose up and began to move slowly, with hesitating steps, through the dark wood, not knowing where to go, yet not daring to stay where she was.

And suddenly, as she went, she looked before her, and there, in an open space, again she saw her husband, lying still under a tree. Instantly she stopped, and stood, balanced in the swing of vacillation. For the joy of reunion, and the desire of safety, and the fear of solitude drew her towards him like a threefold cord: while the memory of her deception, and the fear of illusion, and the anticipation of unknown danger, fixed her to the ground like roots. And she wavered, and swayed on her feet, like a young shoot fanned by opposing breezes: while large tears fell from her eyes, like drops of camphor from a moonstone.[1] And as she stood there doubting whether he were dead or alive, for his face was wan in the

[1] The Hindoos have a superstition, illustrated in a previous page, that moonstones in the rays of the moon distil a sort of lunar syrup, nectar or camphor, supposed to be composed of the substance of the moon.

light of the pallid moon, his eyes opened, and met her own. And he sprang up, and ran towards her, while she remained unable to stir, and took her in his arms, while she shrank from his embrace. And he exclaimed: The sight of thee has lifted me out of the mouth of death, for I had determined to abandon the body. And then he said again: Alas! and why, O thou of the lovely eyes, dost thou shrink from me? But Shrí remained silent, torn by suspicion, and shaken by the beating of her own heart. And ever and anon she raised her eyes, and looked at him in doubt. And then at last she said slowly: Art thou indeed my husband? is it really thyself and no one else? Then he said: What is thy question or thy doubt? Hast thou forgotten me already? Surely it is but a little while since I lost thee in the palace of Indirálayá. Then said Shrí, sighing: There came to me but now one who resembled thee in every feature, and deceived me: and even now, I shudder when I think of it, lest thou too should be another such as he.

Then he said: Dear, thou art weak, and a dream has deceived thee: but this time, it is no dream. Know that I am none other than myself, and thou art with me. Let me dispel thy terror with a kiss. And he bent down, and she raised her face with a smile, saying to herself: It

was nothing but a dream. But even as she touched his face, it changed, and became gigantic and misshapen, with a large tongue that hung out of lips that resembled those of a cow; and it broke out into loud laughter, and disappeared. But Shrí fell to the ground, as if menaced by the outstretched forefinger of death.

XV

THE DEAD OF NIGHT

So she lay, all night long: and when at length the day dawned, she came, though with difficulty, back to herself. And she tried to rise, but could not, for her limbs refused to do their duty. So she lay there, cold as snow, and shivering like the surface of a lake ruffled by the wind.

Then gradually the sun left his home in the eastern mountain, and ascended the sky. And warmed by his beams, a little of her strength returned: and after a while, she rose to her feet, which wandered away, and carried her where they would, until they brought her to another forest pool. And there she lay down, and leaned and drank of its water. And she looked into its mirror, and saw herself, slender and emaciated as the old moon, but pale and colourless as that moon

at midday.[1] And her long hair fell down over her shoulder into the water. Then she bound up that wet hair into a knot, and remained all day by the pool, not endeavouring to go further: for she said to herself: Rather let me stay here to perish of hunger, or furnish myself food to some wild beast, than continue my journey through a wood filled with illusions worse than a hundred deaths. For they wear the guise of a friend, and so finding entrance into my heart sting it like serpents, turning into poison the nectar of him whom most of all I long to see. Surely my sins in a former birth were terrible in their enormity: for I have suffered in this existence pain sufficient for many lives. And now I feel that I cannot long endure, for my strength is becoming exhausted. O that I could indeed find my husband, were it only to die in his arms!

So she sat by the pool, grieving like a female *chakrawáka* for her mate, while the sun made, like the enemy of Bali, but three steps over the sky. And when at last he sank, she also grew weary, and fell asleep on the edge of the pool And in her dreams she saw her husband, and

[1] The same idea is beautifully put by Butler in *Hudibras*, where he calls the sun's light on the moon a

> "Mysterious veil, of brightness made,
> That's both her lustre and her shade."

drank her fill of the nectar of his embraces. And then, in the dead of night, she awoke, and sat up, and looked, and lo! there in the moonlight she saw him again, silently sitting beside her. And she leaped to her feet in agony, and turned to fly, and screamed aloud. For there stood before her another husband on the other side. Then suddenly the whole wood was full of laughter. And her reason fled, and she became mad. And she exclaimed: Out on this wood, for it is full of husbands! And she began to run through the wood, shutting her eyes, and stopping her ears.

XVI

BEFORE DAWN

And now, by the decree of destiny, it so happened, that Umra-Singh, having wandered through the whole world looking for his wife, roaming up and down in the forest, was lying asleep in another place, close to that very pool. And suddenly he laughed in his sleep. For in his dreams he had found again the Land of the Lotus of the Sun. And he stood once more in the moonlit hall, beside the golden couch. Then slowly, slowly, he raised the pall, and looked long at the face of Shrí. But as he gazed, it became apish, and stuck out at him a large red tongue. And he

saw before him, not Shrí, but the old Wairágí. Then a shout of laughter rang in his ears, mingled with the voices of criers and the din of drums; and he started to his feet awake, with an icy sweat on his brow.

And as he stood there, doubting still, for the laughter in his waking ears, whether he woke or slept, he looked before him, and saw in the moonlight the figure of a woman, running towards him: and instantly he knew her to be Shrí. For out of the shadow of her floating hair her great eyes glittered in the moon like the blade of his own sword, and flashed into the night before her like lightning from a dark blue cloud. And he ran to meet her with a shout of joy. But Shrí, when she saw him coming, stopped short, and began to laugh like one possessed by a vampire. And crying: What, another! she turned and fled away from him faster than ever, covering her eyes with her hands. But Umra-Singh was so astonished, that he stood like a tree, rooted to the ground: saying to himself: Is it reality, or is it a dream? Yonder she flies from me in terror as if I were an enemy.

And then, seized with frenzy, he began to pursue her, calling aloud: Shrí! Shrí! So they ran through the wood in the moonlight, in and out of the trees, like a spotted panther and a black ante-

lope. And suddenly, Shrí slipped and fell. And a tawny lion leaped out of the wood, before the eyes of Umra-Singh, and stood over her as she lay. Then Umra-Singh turned white with fear, and uttered a groan. And in a moment he reached them as he ran, and struck at the lion with all his force, a blow of his sword. Then lo! that phantom lion vanished, for he was but an illusion of the crafty Nightwalker. But the sword fell, sharp and true, on the shoulder of Shrí, and cut through to her heart.

Then Umra-Singh fell on his knees beside her with a wail, and took his darling in his arms, while her blood gushed out over him like a river, carrying away her life. And as his hot tears fell on her face like rain, Shrí opened her dying eyes: and instantly they were full of peace, for she knew that it was her husband at last. And she said slowly: Weep not for me, O my lord, for I have attained the emancipation of union with thee. All day long, I have sought thee: but I have found thee in the evening, before my sun goes down: that is enough.

Dawn

And at that very moment, the curse came to an end. Then those two erring lovers regained their immortal natures. And they looked at one another, dazed and bewildered, for they thought that they had awaked from a dream. And their spirits rose out of those mortal bodies which they had abandoned, and soared away to their heavenly home, locked in each other's arms.

But Maheshwara, from his seat on Kailàs, saw them go. And perceiving all, by the power of his mystical intuition, he said to himself: There are those two foolish lovers rejoicing to have awaked from a dream; not knowing that it was but a dream within a dream, and that they are still asleep. And he laughed aloud: and the thunder of the shout of his laughter rolled and reverberated, and rattled in the blue hollows of Himálaya, like the sound of a drum.



भंगीभक्तिभावैं नमः

In the Great God's Hair

(सुरासुरादिमानदा)

पतिः सतीनाम् परमम् हि दैवतम्

Thou art my Lord: I, thy Sati:
I have no other God but Thee.
—Motto of the Faithful Hindoo Wife.

Dedicated to Husbands and Wives

Preface

THE name of the little Indian fable, here presented to the lover of curiosities in an English dress, is ambiguous. We may translate it indifferently, either: *The new moon in the hair of the God of Gods:* or else: *She that reduces the pride of Gods, demons, and all the rest of creation;* that is, the Goddess of Beauty and Fortune. To those unfamiliar with the peculiar genius of the Sanskrit language, it might seem singular, that two such different ideas should be expressible by the one and the same word. But it is just in this power of dexterous ambiguity that the beauty of that language lies. As there are butterflies' and beetles' wings, of which we find it impossible to say, that they are positively this colour or that—for according to the light in which we view them they change and turn, now dusky red, now peacock-blue, now it may be dark purple or old-gold —so a well-formed Sanskrit compound word will subtly shoot and coruscate with meaning, as do those wondrous wings with colour: and this studied double, treble, manifold signification of

its words lends to the classic tongue a sort of verbal sheen, a perpetual undercurrent of indirect suggestion, a by-play of allusion, a prismatic beauty, of which no other language can convey the least idea. For translation must split up what in the original is a unity.[1] And so, our title, according to the value which we choose to assign to its component elements, can be taken to denote, either the hair-jewel of the moon-crested god, or the universal pre-eminence of world-wildering Aphrodite.

And at the risk of incurring the charge of mysticism, I would venture the opinion that our author, in wavering thus between two meanings, two notions at first sight utterly distinct and different, has instinctively seized a subtle analogy, difficult to analyse, and more obvious perhaps in the clear and silent Indian atmosphere than in our own thick and foggy clime: one, however, to which all ancient mythologies bear witness, by invariably connecting their Great Goddesses with the Moon. Night after night, when the fierce fury of the merciless, intolerable Indian sun has spent its energy—there are days in the hot weather, when the very last ray from his disappearing

[1] And it has often occurred to me that Western theologians suffer from want of acquaintance with Sanskrit, for nothing could furnish so apt an illustration of an indecomposable "trinity in unity" as a compound Sanskrit word.

rim seems to bore like a red-hot nail into your skull and drain away your life like a great blood leech—when *at last* the enemy has gone, and the blue, mild, lustrous Dark with its healing, soothing, balmy peace has fallen over the fainting world, I have watched the inexhaustible Beauty of the Moon: and then it is, that there seems as it were to glide into the soul, like a nurse into a sick room, something, some presence, vast, infinite, and feminine. The pale and shadowy Holda passes over the dusky dome, with the stars in her violet hair, or is it rather the Blessed Virgin, the ancient hornèd Isis, stretching colossal over the blue, with the Moon beneath her feet? Mere fancy, says the reader: and yet I do not know. Something there seems to be in common, something that all the ancient nations felt, between the beauty of an Eastern night with the Moon in its forehead, and the strange, consolatory, cosmic magnetism that Woman and her mystic Beauty [1] exert over her everlasting patient, Man. Take away her sympathy, and his life would resemble nothing so much as the thirsty earth, parching under an Indian Noon, for ever without a Night.

For the proper comprehension of this story,

[1] The *ποτνια νύξ* of Euripides is pure Sanskrit: *patní naktá:* Lady Night.

the English reader ought to know, that just as its keynote—*husband is a good wife's god*—is the very core of Hindoo manners, so the type and model of all devoted wives, the *Satí*, or Constant Wife, *par excellence*, is Párwatí, the wife of the moon-crested god. He and she together are the symbol of wedded harmony, so close and indissoluble, that they are regarded, under one aspect, as having but a single body between them, which they share: he is the god, *whose other, or left half, is his wife:* and poets compare their relation to that obtaining between a *word* and its *meaning*. They are the incarnation of bi-sexual unity, HERMAPHRODITUS, the ideal type of sacred indissoluble marriage. In India, marriage is still something more and deeper than a contract, and has not therefore yet become ridiculous. In India, the gods are not yet pallid spectral ghosts, rationalistic *residua* of neuter gender, but the immortal lovers of their wives; and conjugal affection is what it ought to be, typified in heaven, the highest pleasure even of the gods. They carry their wives about in their arms, sit them on their knee, and are inseparable from them. And in return, their wives are their devoted slaves. *Who*, says the Hindoo proverb, *is the best-loved woman? She that adores her husband as a god.*

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NOTE.—The legend below the Vignette, representing the Goddess of Beauty, is a beautiful alliterative compound alluding to her origin from the sea. The alliteration evaporates in the process of translation: but the meaning is: *Hail to her whose being is the essence of the tumbling ocean waves, all love, emotion, agitation and broken curves!*

Prologue

PROLOGUE

Invocation

Adoration to the Four Eightfold Divinities: the Eight Forms of the Lord of Time: the Eight Cardinal Points of Space: the Eight Sections of the Revelation of Panini: and the Eight Pairs of Petals of the Lotus of the World.[1]

Far away, in the quarter of the north, there stands a mighty mountain: of supereminence so transcendent that even the Mother of the World [2] was willing to call him father: of hue so pure that even the snowy swans haunting the lake of Mánasa blush in his presence as if ashamed of their own inferiority: of size so gigantic that the rising and the setting sun throws his shadow on the sky, and the seven Rishis [3] in their daily revolution turn their eyes upwards to his peak,

[1] The Lord of Time is Shiwa. Panini's grammar is believed to have been revealed to him by the deity. The Lotus of the world is the goddess of beauty.

[2] Párwatí is the Daughter of Himálaya.

[3] The Great Bear.

glowing like a tongue of flame at sunset or at dawn. And there on his northern face is the home of the Lord of Creatures animate or inanimate. There one evening, when the light of day was flying before the shadows that rose up pursuing it out of the abysses of the valleys along the mountain sides, the Daughter of the Mountain was playing at dice with her lord.[1] And she won from him, first his elephant skin, and next his rosary of skulls. And finally she said: Now, then, I will play thee for that which thou dost carry on thy head. And Maheshwara perceived her intention. But he answered: Very well. So the goddess threw the dice, and won. And she exclaimed in delight: Ha! I have won. Pay me the stake. Then Maheshwara gave her his moon. Thereupon the goddess exclaimed in a rage: Thou art a deceiver. Thou dost owe me Gangá, and yet offer me only thy moon.[2] What do I care for thy moon? Then said the god: Why, O fair one, art thou angry? Is it not this moon which I carry on my head? But Umá turned away from him in a pet.

Then the crafty god, who had only teased her

[1] As, if we may believe Bhartrihari, they often do, for the lives of men.

[2] Párwatí is represented in Hindoo literature as being very jealous of Gangá (the river Ganges) because Shiwa caught her, or it, upon his head.

to enjoy the beauty or her anger, preparing to conciliate her, said: Come, the game is over. So now, give me my moon, which to thee is worse than useless, since thy own face would rob it of its lustre, being itself a moon always at full. Moreover, I cannot do without it. Then said the goddess: Why canst thou not do without it? And Maheshwara said: Know, that were it withdrawn from the forehead of me who am the world,[1] this universe would cease to exist. Then said Umá: How can that be? And the god said: Of all created things, the new moon is the fairest. And therefore it is that I wear it in my hair, as a symbol of that power which is the pivot of all motion animate and inanimate. For Beauty is the ruler of the world, and without it, all would remain plunged in darkness, and motionless. And there is a story connected with this. Then the goddess, filled with curiosity, exclaimed: Tell me the story, and I will give thee thy moon, and forgive thy deceit. And Maheshwara said: Very well. For this was just what he wished her to do.

Then Umá gave him his moon, and he set it in his yellow hair. And then he sat down, with his back against a precipice, and took her on his lap. And she laid her head on his breast, and prepared to listen to his tale.

[1] *Bhawa* means both Shiwa and the world.

But just as the god was about to begin, he looked down, and saw, far away on the side of the hill below him, a man, toiling up painfully over the cold white snow. And he looked in the middle of that vast wilderness like an ant, lost among the blocks of salt in the desert. Then said the god to Umá: Look! there is a man. What can he be doing here, where no mortal ever comes? It were better to wait and see. Then the goddess exclaimed: Thou art about to deceive me again. This is a trick, to cheat me of my story. And Maheshwara said: Nay, thou shalt certainly hear it without delay. But first let us discover, what is the object of this poor mortal. And he called out to the man: Ho there! who art thou? and why art thou climbing up alone through the ice and snow?

Then hearing the voice, which echoed like thunder among the hills, that man fell face downwards upon the snow. And he said: O Maheshwara, giver of boons, for surely it is thou that I hear and no other, I am come to thee as a suppliant, and all my hope is in thee. Know, that I am a *Kathaka*,[1] belonging to the household of the King of Pátaliputra, a city of the plains. And every night before he went to rest, I told him a story, to beguile him and bring sleep to his

[1] A story teller.

eyes. So for fourteen years I told him stories, every night one. And then at last, one night, when the time came for him to go to bed, I said to him: O King, my stock is finished, and my fancy exhausted, and now I cannot tell thee any more. Then he looked upon me with red, angry eyes. And he said: O dog, how is this? Shall I not sleep, by reason of the poverty of thy faculty? So I fell on my face before him, and said: Let the King show me cy. But I am empty, and the fountain of my invention has run dry. Then he said: Know, that thou art no longer my *Kathaka*, but another has thy place. And know, moreover, that if in three months from to-day, for I will be merciful, and allow thee time, thou dost not tell me a story more curious than anything I have ever heard, I will sever thy empty head from thy body, first tearing out thy useless tongue, and uproot thy family and all thy relations from the land, like a furious wind among the trees at the opening of the rainy season. And immediately he sent and seized them, and holds them now as hostages for my return. And so, seeing no other resource, I have come to thy feet, travelling night and day without either food or rest. For thou knowest all, past, present, and to come, and now I am in thy hands.

Then said Maheshwara to his wife: Thou seest, we did well to wait; and now, this unlucky *Kathaka* has arrived in the very nick of time. So let him listen to our tale. But whether for his good or ill, time alone can show. Then he took the *Kathaka*, and put him up into his hair. And at the touch of his hand, that *Kathaka* was delivered in a moment from all his fatigue and exhaustion, and he sat in the shadow of that matted hair, illuminated like a forest of great trees by the diadem of the deity, to overhear the tale.

And then the god began. And as he spoke, the Gándharwas, and the Kinnaras, and the Siddhas and Widyádharas came noiselessly and collected in the air, and listened with eager ears.

A Lotus of the World

I

A DENIER OF DEITY

LONG ago, in the very beginning, when the world and all its creatures and even the gods themselves were young, there lived in a certain country a King who died, leaving the kingdom to his heir. And this heir was only eighteen years old, and his name was Ranga.[1] And though he resembled in person a combination of the gods of love and war, and was beloved by his subjects, he was generous and hot-tempered and open-hearted and credulous and inexperienced in the ways of the world: and he fell accordingly an easy prey to the schemes of his relations, who plotted against him: and he was ousted from his throne by his maternal uncle, who got the better of him by treachery and drove him out of the kingdom, with nothing left but his life.

So Ranga fled, and wandering from place to place in disguise, took refuge in a neighbouring kingdom, having become from the king of a

[1] "Dye," "colour," and so, "a field of battle." (Pronounce to rhyme approximately with *hunger*.)

country a wandering Rajpoot, heir to nothing but his sword, and starvation, or dependence on others. And he lost his temper, and flew into a rage with everything in the three worlds. And he cursed, first himself, and next his uncle, and then his relations, and finally even the gods. And he exclaimed: O gods, I cast you all away and disavow you. For all my life I have been pious, and cultivated your divinity, and honoured you with praises and offerings: and yet by way of return, you have paid no attention to me, and allowed me to fall into this condition. Now, therefore, I have become an atheist and a *nástika*.[1] And in his rage he abused the gods, calling them all by their names. And then he said: Henceforth I will worship none of you, and nothing, save only Her who alone deserves adoration, the Great Goddess of Chance and Wealth and Beauty and Fortune, who rules over the three worlds. And he broke out into praises of the goddess, then and there. And he said: O thou who resemblest the sea that produced thee, O Kamalá, O Padmá, O Shrí, O Lakshmí,[2] O

[1] An infidel or sceptic: one who "says no" or denies.

[2] The names of the goddess are so innumerable, that if accurately followed they would only puzzle the English reader. They may, however, be tabulated generally as referring either to her beauty, her *inconstancy*, or her connection with the *lotus*. I have therefore chosen for her name

Beauty of beauties and Lotus of lotuses, show thy miserable worshipper favour. Thou art the very essence and soul of caprice, thou art compounded of the substance of waves and of bubbles and flashes of lightning, rivers that flow and flames that flicker, shifting shadows and woman's wiles. Fair and fickle and false and fleeting, thou dost wander and rove at thy own sweet will from one to another, abiding never anywhere long. Thy only law is thy wanton fancy, thy whim of a moment makes one man rich and another poor, one a king and another a beggar, through no merit of his own or reason of thine. Thou art my only god, for thou only art a true divinity, and I worship the sole of thy foot. O thou feminine incarnation of lustre and grace, white and wayward and tremulous and treacherous as foam of the sea, omnipotent, bewildering, frivolous, inconstant, dissoluble as sand, unsubstantial as dreams, I worship the colour in thy long, deceitful, intoxicating eyes, and the undulating swell of thy wave-like limbs. I offer myself to thee as a votary and a victim; do as thou wilt with me. Raise me or lower me, all is the same to me, for my devotion is absolute: thou art my divinity and thy pleasure is my fate.

that of *Water-Lily:* the word of all others that best conveys her general attributes to an English ear.

And as he went on, it so happened, by the decree of destiny, that WATER-LILY heard him. And without his knowledge, she came near him, to listen to what he said And she was much pleased by his praises, all the more that she was new to them, having herself but lately risen from the sea. And she looked at him out of the corner of her long lotus eyes, and saw that he was very young, and very handsome; and she took a sudden fancy to him, and pitied him. So when he had finished, she cast at him a glance of approval, smiling with honied lips like a coquette [1] whose vanity is flattered, and she said: Come, I will prove to this good-looking young Rajpoot that he was not deceived, when he chose my divinity for adoration as more worthy of worship than that of any other of the gods.

So that very night, to do him a service, she put a strange thought into his head. And Ranga said to himself: Now I have become a worshipper of Fortune, and a gambler, and now I must put her to the proof, and see what she will do for me. For even she can do nothing for those who sit still, and give her no opportunity of taking their part. So he went out and wandered up and down in the streets of the city, looking for anything that

[1] Sanskrit is, I think, the only other language that possesses an exact equivalent for the French.

chance might throw in his way. And as he passed by the palace of the King, he looked up, and saw at the top of a tower a room with eight round windows, one at each point of the sky. And as he stood looking at it, a man of the town said to him: Rajpoot, what are you about? Do you not know that it is forbidden even to look at the place where the King keeps his biggest pearl. Then Ranga said to himself: I wonder what sort of a pearl that may be, of which it is not permitted even to look at the case. And he went away filled with curiosity; and as he went, WATERLILY blew it into a flame, till he felt a burning desire to satisfy his wish. And finally he said: I will go this very night, and climb up, somehow or other, and see with my own eyes this wonderful pearl.

So he provided himself with a bow and arrow, and a very long string, and a coil of rope. And taking all these with him, he went in the middle of the night, and hid himself in the street in the shadow. For the moonlight lit up the palace tower, and buried the other side of the street in the blackness of night. And there he remained, waiting, till he saw the watch come by on its round. Then as soon as it had passed, he came out, and quickly shot the arrow, to which he had tied the end of the string, over the corner of the

parapet of the tower. And the arrow fell back to the ground, and Ranga took the string, and tied it to the rope, and drew it up rapidly, till all the string came to an end, and he held in his hands the two ends of the rope. And then very quickly he climbed up with hands and feet like a monkey, and reached the window, and got in through it, leaving the rope hanging down.

II

A RAJPOOT MARRIAGE

And then he stepped into the room, and started, and stood amazed. For just before him there lay sleeping on a jewelled couch a young woman, looking like a jasmine flower on a bed of its own leaves. For the moon bathed her in his light, which clung to her limbs as if it were in love with them: and she resembled a feminine incarnation of the passion of love fallen into a swoon of fatigue and pallor after having conquered the world. And the long lashes of her shut eyes lay on her cheek like shadows as far as her mouth, which smiled as she slept: while the breeze lifted the fringe of the silk robe that covered her neck, and laid bare the beauty of her throat, just where it met with the curve of her bosom, that rose and fell gently as she breathed.

And one hand was under her head, and the other lay, like an open flower, hanging over the edge of the bed, from a wrist like a young reed's stalk.

And as he stood motionless, like a target with the arrow of Love in his heart, she woke up. For WATER-LILY entered her dream and showed her a picture, and said to her: Wake, for I have brought thee a husband more beautiful than Káma himself. And when she opened her eyes and looked: lo! there he was standing before her. And instantly she started up, and stood gazing at him in astonishment. For he answered so exactly to her dream that she could not believe her eyes, and doubted whether she had not only dreamed that she woke, and was still really asleep. And then after a while, she said: Art thou a reality, or only a thing in my dream? And he said: O sleeping beauty, I am a reality: but I wish it were not so: for I would gladly forfeit my life to be only a thing in thy dreams. Then she said: Who in the world art thou, and how in the world hast thou climbed into my room, into which none ever come but my female attendants and the birds of the air? And he said: O waking beauty, I am Ranga, the King of Awanti, whom his relations have driven from his kingdom. But what do I care: for had it been otherwise, I should never have set eyes upon thee.

But when she heard his name, she started, and could not believe her own ears. And she said: Tell me thy name over again. Then he did so. And she said: Surely I must still be dreaming. Or art thou really sent by the deity? Tell me thy story from the beginning. And so he did. And she watched him as he spoke, with eyes that she could not take off him. For WATER-LILY bewildered her with his beauty, and poured infatuation into his voice.

And when he had finished, she said to him: O thou son of a King, beyond a doubt the deity must have brought thee, for there is in this matter a thing wholly unknown to thee, so strange, that it cannot have come about of itself. But now, listen, for I have a proposal to make to thee. Know, that the King my father wishes to give me as a bride to a neighbouring King for the sake of a political alliance. And rather than be a bride of that King, I had intended to cast myself down from this window into the street, for I cannot endure the sight of him even in a picture. And now thou hast appeared, as if on purpose, to provide me with a means of escape. Thou art poor and without a kingdom, which it may be thou wilt never regain. But thou art my equal in *caste*, and unless the Creator has made thy exterior a lie, my equal also in spirit and soul. Wilt thou have

me for a wife, as I am willing to choose thee for a husband, and carry me down by the rope by which thou didst bring thyself up? For I will choose thee for my husband, of my own free will,[1] and share all thy poverty and evil fortune and make it a blessing to thee. Swear to me only that thou wilt deal with me loyally and share with me, as with thy other self, all thy troubles and all thy joys in this world and the next, and I will place myself as a deposit in thy hands. And it may be that I will change all thy evil fortune to good: and if not, I will help thee to endure it with patience. And now, say: is the bargain to thy mind? And think ere thou givest an answer: for I will not be bought by thee with anything less than thy soul.

And when she had spoken, she looked straight at him, with beautiful eyes, in which there was neither frivolity nor fear. And Ranga looked back at her, and his heart swelled in his breast: for she touched it not only by her beauty but by the strength of her soul. And he laughed for joy, and said: Hear me, ye guardians of the quarters of heaven! O thou fair woman, thy loveliness is wonderful, and yet it is the least part of thy

[1] This is the old *swayamwara*, a recognised privilege of kings' daughters. The reader must not look at it with English eyes. An unceremonious marriage is a constant feature in old Hindoo tales: and it is none the less a marriage.

excellence. Now thou art worthy of one better than I am. And yet, if thou wilt give thyself to me for a wife, I will be thy lord and thy protector in this life and the next, and thou shalt be my divinity in human form. And I will want food and clothing before thou shalt want sweetmeats and jewels. And he stooped down and touched her feet, and put his hand on his head: and then stood and looked at her with a smile. And she looked at him with affection; and said: Thou art the man whom I have desired to have for a husband, and now I see that my dream was a true one. And now I am thy wife, and thy servant.

Then he said: Dear wife, now we must go down, and that quickly, before we are discovered. And yet, though thou art light as a bamboo leaf, this is a dangerous thing. Hast thou the courage to make the attempt? Then she said: What is there to fear? For if we fall, we fall together, and meet death at the same instant. But have no fear: for I will cling to thy neck with my arms. Then Ranga laughed. And he said: Nay, I will not risk my pearl on the strength of thy soft and slender arms. Then he took from the bed a silk cover, and twisted it into a rope. And he bound it tightly round her waist, and then tied it firmly to his own. And then he drew her to the window, and looked down. And at that

moment he saw the watch, going its round a second time. So when it had passed, he said: Now is our opportunity. But she said: Wait: let me bring with me all the wealth that I have, for at present thou art poor. And she made a bundle of clothes, and put into it all her jewels: and flung it down into the street. And then he said: Art thou afraid? And she said: I am afraid, but only for thee. Then he said: Shut thy eyes, and clasp me round the neck, and hold. So she did. And then Ranga wove the rope round his legs, and grasped it in his hands with a grip like that of death, and let himself slowly down into the street. So he carried her down to the ground, while the sweat stood in great drops upon his brow.

And when they touched the earth, she said: Thou art as strong as thou art brave, and the deity has sent me a man. But Ranga clasped her in his arms, and kissed her. And he said: Now I may kiss thee, for we have faced death together, and I have made thee my own. But here we must not stay even for a moment. And he picked up the bundle, and went away quickly, carrying her in his arms, and counting the whole world as a straw. And he said to her: Where shall we go, for in the city they would discover thee? Then she said: Close to this city there is

another, which is empty and deserted, and inhabited only by parrots and monkeys. Let us go there, and afterwards consider what is to be done. And I will show thee the way.

So he carried her away to that empty city, never once setting her down, for the joy he had in holding her in his arms. And when at last they reached it, he stopped before a courtyard, and went in, and saw in it a deserted cow-house, full of hay and straw. And he put her down, and untied the knots, and set her free. And then he said: Alas! that I should take thee from a palace, to bring thee to such a ruined shed as this. And she said: Where the husband is, there is the heaven of the wife. And he said again: Alas! I am an exile and a wanderer, and I have taken thee from thy relations and thy home. And she said: Is not the wife the child of her husband, and the husband the father and mother of his wife? And what home does she need who has taken refuge in the heart of her lord?[1] Then he put his left arm round her, and took her left hand in his right, and kissed it. And he said: What is thy name? And she said: I am called Wanawallarí.[2] Then he said: Thou art well named, and now I will be the tree of thy life. Come, and

[1] So, in the *Katha Sarit Ságara*, speaks Rupashikhá.

[2] "Wood-creeper": "forest-flower." (Pronounce *wan-* as *nun*, and *-wall-* as *dull*.)

I will find thee a room in this abandoned palace, that shall serve thee for a bridal chamber, and I will make thee a nuptial couch of hay and straw. For this is our wedding night, and see, yonder is the polar star.[1]

III

WATER-LILY

But in the meanwhile, the gods [2] were aware of what had occurred. For they had heard the abuse that Ranga showered upon them in his despair. And when they saw that by the assistance of Water-Lily he had obtained Wanawallarí for his wife, they were very angry both with the goddess and with him. And they met in Indra's hall, to discuss the matter and determine what was to be done. But I was not there, for I bore no grudge against Ranga, knowing his youth and the provocation which had occasioned his outburst, and forgiving it. And Nárayana [3] also was absent, for so far from being angry with Ranga, he was pleased with him for heaping praises on

[1] The Pole Star is the symbol of marriage, and the emblem of a bride.

[2] When the gods are spoken of collectively they are generally understood not to include the great gods, Brahma, Wishnu, and Shiwa, each of whom has a claim to be considered the greatest.

[3] Wishnu, of whom Water-Lily is the wife.

his wife, who is a part of himself, as thou art of me.[1] So having met, they said indignantly to one another: This alone would be scandalous and intolerable, that a mortal should insolently load us with abuse for not being at his beck and call as if we were nothing but the slaves of our worshippers. But worse than all, here has WATER-LILY actually rewarded the rascal by giving him the most beautiful woman in the three worlds for a wife: so that instead of being pun shed for his bad behaviour, he has actually received a prize. And if this continues, we are wholly undone, and the established constitution of the universe will be destroyed. For it all depends on praise, worship and sacrifice[2]: but if men get our favours without these, who will be at the pains of propitiating us at all? Thus though the conduct of this mortal is bad, that of WATER-LILY is infinitely worse. For she has taken the part of a mortal, siding against the gods, merely because she was caught by the cunning fellow's flattery.

Then WATER-LILY laughed, looking at them all askance out of the corner of her long eyes that reached nearly to her ears. And she said:

[1] Maheshwara is speaking to his wife.

[2] Plato's idea, that the relation between gods and men is one of commercial reciprocity (ἐμπορικὴ) is precisely that of the Hindoos, who lay it down in a hundred places as the essence of the *stithi*, or established constitution of things.

Surely I have done little worthy of blame, if I have rewarded my worshipper for his praises, as all you ought long ago to have done. For if we pay no attention to them, these mortals will leave us and laugh at us, and then we shall perish for want of our proper sustenance. And so it is not I, but rather you yourselves, that are to blame for leaving him alone. Moreover, after all, he is quite right in considering my power and divinity as stronger than all others, for so in fact it is.

But hearing her words, the gods were enraged, and exclaimed: Fie! fie! And they determined to show her that she was mistaken, and punish her protégé: and they arranged that Indra should descend to the earth, and find him, and make an example of him. But that crafty WATER-LILY said to herself: Now will I show all these foolish gods, and especially Indra, that beauty and fortune are enemies hard even for gods to overcome. And she played the hypocrite, and said to them, with an illusive smile on her beautiful lips: When a fault has been committed, it is for the guilty person to make reparation. Let Indra go down: but I will myself help to bring the sinner to justice and undo my own mischief, by causing the King to discover the whereabouts of Ranga and his wife.

Then the gods were pleased, for she threw them all off their guard by her apparent submission. And they said: She is very young, and moreover, she is a woman, and doubtless she was caught by this rascal's beauty of person, and his flattery: but now she has changed her mind, which is variable as the sea out of which she arose. So we must not be angry with her.

IV

A GOD AND A MORTAL

And in the morning, those two lovers rose from their bed of hay and straw, which had been to them by the favour of the goddess a nuptial couch sweeter than *amrita* and softer than the down of royal swans. And then, by the instigation of the goddess, Wanawallarí said to her husband: Dear husband, though we can sleep, we cannot live upon hay and straw, and now thou wilt have to leave me for a little. And she gave him a bracelet, made of rubies as large as pigeons' eggs, and said: Take this, and sell it in the city, and with the money buy provisions for us: and bring back with thee a *winá*,[1] and above all, come back as quickly as possible, for I cannot bear thee to be out of my sight. But there will be no

[1] A species of lute.

danger, for no one saw thee carry me off. And meanwhile I will wait for thee in this empty palace, with my eyes fixed on the road by which thou art to return.

Then Ranga said: I am adverse to leaving thee, even for an instant. And yet, unless we could become cows and eat hay, I must find food for thee, and I cannot take thee with me: so there is no help for it. And he took the bracelet and went away quickly, saying to her: I will be with thee almost before I have gone away.

And as soon as he was gone, Wanawallarí said to herself: Now will I adorn myself like a city to welcome the return of its sovran lord after a long absence. And she chose from her bundle the best of all that it contained, and braided her hair very carefully, bathing in a pool in the court, and using its water for a mirror. And when she had finished, she was pleased with her own appearance; and she said to herself: He shall rejoice when he sees me again, and I will watch the pleasure on his face. And yet she did not know, that WATER-LILY was prompting her to adorn herself, to fascinate not her husband, but somebody else. So when she was dressed, she went out and sat in the shade of a great banyan tree that grew over a well near the pool, and fixed her eyes on the path by which Ranga was to appear.

And at that moment, just when, by the contrivance of the crafty WATER-LILY, Ranga was away, and Wanawallarí was sitting under the tree, alone and adorned, Indra descended to the earth, and in the disguise of an old Brahman, came along the road, towards the empty palace, in which he knew that those lovers had passed the night. And Wanawallarí looked and saw him. And saying to herself: This is only an old Brahman, and I have nothing to fear: she sat still by the well, watching him approach. So the disguised Indra drew near her. And when he came up, he looked at her, as she sat still under the tree. And he was thunderstruck, as if by one of his own bolts, by her beauty, not knowing that WATER-LILY was pouring into it her own fascination to bewilder him, and employing as an instrument the charms of Wanawallarí. For her lovely limbs were half revealed and half concealed by the folds of her robe of silver muslin, as the moonlit mist that rises from the spray at Gangotri both hides and shows the rocks over which the water flows: and she had bare feet and heavy golden anklets, and great gold bangles that made her little hands look smaller, and jewelled armlets that encircled her arms just above the elbow, making those round arms seem even rounder than before: and a string of great pearls

round her neck, and one great grass-green [1] emerald in her jet-black hair. And as he looked at her, the clearness of his mind was disturbed and agitated by emotion; for she struck him hard, as she looked at him with calm eyes. And he said to himself: Why, this mortal woman would laugh at every Apsaras in my court: and if WATERLILY has seen her, I cannot understand how she has not died of envy. And he said to Wanawallarí: O lady of the lovely eyes, thou art surely the wife of Ranga, whom I have come to see?

Then Wanawallarí said: Sir, it is true that I am his wife, though I cannot tell how it could be known to thee so soon. For yesterday I was no wife, but an unhappy maiden, and last night was my wedding night. Then said Indra: O fragile one, all things can be known, by the power of asceticism and years. And it is not hard to see that thou art the bride of a day. For thy lotus eyes are full of new happiness, and peaceful, and not, like those of an unmarried maiden, agitated and alarmed.

Then said Wanawallarí: Brahman, if thou art come to see my husband, know, that he is away: and I am awaiting his return. And it does not become a woman of good family to talk to strange

[1] This epithet (*shashpashyáma*) would appear to mean that *shadowy* hue which is seen in the hollows of *grass* when lit by the sun.

men. I pray thee, therefore, to leave me and come back again another time. Then said Indra: Moon-faced lady, old age is a condition hard to bear, and full of evils, and it would be altogether unendurable, but for its privileges: of which one is, that an old man may converse without scandal even with the young wife of another man. For when the fire is extinct, what has the fuel to fear? And to judge by thy appearance, I am old enough to be thy father, were thy years even double what they are. Since, therefore, I have been so highly favoured by fortune [1] as to find thee instead of thy husband, let me seize my opportunity, and ask thee in his absence, what evil spirit prompted thee to choose for thy husband one known to be a scorner of the gods, and therefore likely to feel their vengeance, and come to a sudden and disgraceful end. For they rarely prosper, whom the gods have determined to punish. Therefore, would it not be thy better course to repent while there is time, and this opportunity is afforded thee by his absence, and leave him to his fate, and save thyself, and sever thy connection with a man doomed and in danger alike from the gods above, and the father from whom he has stolen thee below?

[1] As in fact he had been, but otherwise than as he thought.

V

MAN'S OTHER HALF

And as Wanawallarí listened to his words, she discerned instinctively danger to her husband from that old Brahman. And she said to herself: Who is this that knows all about us already? Is he a spy of my father's, who knows me by sight? Or can he be some god in disguise, come down to injure my husband, or corrupt me for my beauty? For such things have often happened before. And she looked at him coldly, and said: Brahman, thou art an evil counsellor; and I should indeed be more worthless than stubble, should I abandon my husband, for whom I have only just abandoned my parents. Nor can I imagine, by what means all should be known to thee, unless thou art a god. But wert thou the very god whom, if thou speakest the truth, my husband has offended, I would tell thee that my husband did well to scorn one who practises the very thing that he condemns in my husband, in seeking to seduce the wife of another from her religion. Dost thou not know that to a true wife her husband is a god? And if it were the case, as thou sayest, that my husband had abandoned his gods, would it make the case any better if I should forsake him who is mine?

Then said Indra: O lady, luckless and lovelorn, art thou, alas! already so far corrupted by associating with a scorner of the gods as to side with him against them? Know, that he shares the guilt of a crime who approves of the criminal when it is done: and thou dost as it were thyself offer insult to the deity by defending its offender.

Then said Wanawallarí: I know no deity but my husband, and follow him without question or reason, as night follows day. And so far from being wrong, this is the duty of a woman, for it is *dharma*,[1] established from the very beginning, and having its roots in her nature and his. For once there was a time, when there were neither men nor women, but the universe existed alone. And then one day, when the Creator was meditating with a view to further creation he said to himself: Something is wanting to complete this Creation which I have created. It is blind, and unconscious of its own curious beauty and excellence. Thereupon he created a man. And instantly the Creation became an object of wonder and beauty, being reflected like a picture in the mirror of the mind of the man. Then the man roamed alone in the world, wondering at the flowers and the trees and the animals, and at last he came to a pool. And he looked in, and

[1] *Dharma* means law, duty, custom and religion combined.

saw himself. Then full of astonishment, he exclaimed: This is the most beautiful creature of all. And he hunted incessantly through the whole world to find it, not knowing that he was looking for himself. But when he found that in spite of all his endeavours he could never do more than see it on the surface of pools, he became sad, and ceased to care about anything. Then the Creator, perceiving it, said to himself: Ha! this is a difficulty which I never foresaw, arising naturally from the beauty of my work. But now, what is to be done? For here is this man, whom I made to be a mirror for my world, snared in the mirror of his own beauty. So I must somehow or other cure this evil. But I cannot make another man, for then there would be two centres to the circle of the universe. Neither can I add anything to the circumference of Nature, for it is perfect in itself. There is necessary, therefore, some third thing: not real, for then it would disturb the balance of the universe; nor unreal, for then it would be nothing: but poised on the border between reality and non-entity. So he collected the reflections on the surface of the pools, and made of them a woman. But she, as soon as she was made, began to cry. And she said: Alas! alas! I am, and I am not. Then said the Creator: Thou foolish

intermediate creature, thou art a non-entity, only when thou standest alone. But when thou art united to the man, thou art real in participation with his substance. And thus, O Brahman, apart from her husband a woman is a non-entity and a shadow without a substance: being nothing but the mirror of himself, reflected on the mirror of illusion.

VI

WILD FLOWERS

Then said Indra: O slender-waisted lady, thou arguest well of the general duty of wives; and yet this does not vindicate thy own infatuation in consorting with such a one as is he whom thou hast chosen for thy husband. Thou hast sacrificed the flower of thy virgin beauty on an altar unworthy of it, and fallen from the state of a queen to be the wife of a wandering vagabond.

Then said Wanawallarí: O Brahman, every flower, sooner or later, must fade, for this is its destined and inevitable end. Fade it must at last, whether it be on the head of a queen in the palace, or alone in the depths of the wood. And who shall say, whether it is not better for the flower to wither in the wood, than as an ornament in the hair of queens? So then, if I have

abandoned my royal position, and betaken myself to the forest and solitude with my husband, what is lost that deserves to be regretted? Art thou so sure in my case that it is a loss and not rather a gain, if like a flower I live and fade in the forest alone? For once there was a king who was betrayed by his wife. And he cast off his kingdom like a snake its old skin, and threw away everything like a blade of grass, and turned his back upon the world. And he went, not to the Ganges, but away into the great southern forest, for he said: Let me go where I shall never again see a human face, or hear a human voice again. So day after day he went on into the unknown depths of that terrible forest, till after a time he found himself alone with his shadow among the giant trees. And then, all of a sudden, those trees came abruptly to an end. And he looked, and lo! he stood on the bank of a great river, whose water was studded as far as his eye could see with a countless host of lotus flowers that coloured that region blue. And every lotus had for its lover a great golden bee, that buzzed about it like an incarnation of the sun, come down to earth after self-multiplication, like Krishna among the *Gopis*, in order that each lotus might think itself alone beloved. And the king marvelled at the sight of that lonely lotus haunted,

bee-booming river, and he lived there till he died, alone. And if the Creator could frame those fair flowers in the midst of that wilderness to live and die with never an eye to see, surely they were better than if they had all been gathered to fade upon the hair of a million queens. Moreover, where my husband is, there is no solitude: for all the company that I need is his.

VII

OUT OF A FORMER BIRTH

Then said Indra: O dark-haired lady, thou talkest of thy husband as if thou hadst known him from thy birth; whereas thou didst set eyes on him for the very first time in thy life, last night. And how then canst thou tell that he will not cease to satisfy thy soul, or that he on his part may not weary of thee, and cast thee carelessly away: for ye are strangers that have met by chance.

Then said Wanawallarí: Brahman, thou art speaking only to beguile me: or else thou art but a poor pundit on the essence of the world. Know, that a woman recognises in an instant, with unerring sagacity, if only she be fortunate enough to see him, the man proper to be her husband: for this depends not upon the shallow and casual experiences of this life, but the store of reminiscences

of a former birth. Moreover, there are instants and atoms of time containing in themselves causes and consequences that run both ways into the two eternities of the past and the future, being as it were the fruit of the one and the seed of the other: and many times it happens that the twinkling of an eye determines the destiny of a soul. And this was my case: for since I saw my husband, I am other than I was, altered for infinity by a moment of illumination and the nectar of mutual recognition. Has not the Creator planted in the core of all things animate and inanimate aversions and attractions to be their destiny, not to be controlled or disobeyed? As once there was a mournful maiden, married against her will to a certain king. So when they were united, horror and the hatred of life entered and inhabited her soul. And every time that he approached her, she fell into a swoon that resembled a foretaste of death. Then finding it impossible to come near her, that king was amazed. And he said to himself: Surely there must be for this extraordinary antipathy some extraordinary cause, buried in the mysterious darkness of the past. For other women, so far from shunning my embraces, welcome and even court them, becoming *abhisárikás* [1] for my sake: for I am a

[1] An *abhisáriká* is a woman who goes of her own accord to her lover, or, as we might say, throws herself at his head.

very handsome man. And he went and offered sacrifice in the temple of Maheshwara. And standing before the image, he exclaimed: O thou knower of past, present, and future, if thou dost not reveal to me the cause of this aversion, I will this very moment cut off my own head. Then the image of the deity uttered a loud laugh. And it said: O foolish king, this is a very simple thing. Know, that long ago, in a former birth, thou and she fell by reason of sins previously committed into the bodies of brutes. And she became a snake, and thou a peacock. Hence she cannot endure even thy proximity, for thou dost retain a strain of the nature of the peacock, and its vanity. And the king said: But why, then, do I feel no corresponding aversion for her? And the god said: Because in another birth thou wast a bird of the race of Garuda, of which snakes are the appropriate food. Moreover, women retain traces of these affections and abhorrences more permanently than men, because emotion is of the essence of their soul: and plunged in bodies, like vats, they carry away, like pure water, the stain of the dye. So learning the truth, the king took another wife, and lived with her in peace. And thus, O Brahman, I was drawn to my husband the very moment that I saw him by a cord woven in a former birth, irresistible and invisible as the

power that draws grass to the amber jewel. And now I have been riveted to him by our marriage as with adamantine bolts.

VIII

THE ILLUSION OF BEAUTY

Then said Indra: O lady of large eyes and heavy lashes, thou arguest like a partisan in thy own favour: yet is thy action only the result of sudden passion, which made thee forget thy maiden modesty, and like an *abhisáriká* hasten to thy husband's arms, moving not like a woman of good family, but by self-will and independence, attracted by the beauty of thy husband.

Then said Wanawallarí: O Brahman, in this I have done nothing unbecoming a maiden of my *caste*. For the daughters of kings have had from the beginning the privilege of choosing their own husbands. But they show their family in this, that when once they have chosen, they abide by their decision, and cling to their husband with a grasp that laughs at the endeavours of even death to break its hold. And if I have done wrong in yielding to the fascination of my husband, I will make amends for it hereafter. And yet the fault is rather that of the Creator than my own. Wouldst thou blame the lotus for intoxicating

bees? Or why did the Creator give beauty to women or to men, but to snare each other's souls? And even the gods come under thy reproof, for which of them is not subdued by the beauty of his wife? Nay, there are some who have even gone astray, bewildered by the infatuation of beauty in a sex other than their own.[1] Why dost thou blame me for obeying the nature of a woman, and worshipping that masculine beauty which is my goal? For the three worlds are only an incarnation of action such as mine, and thy accusation would rob this universe of motion and life, which subsist only by virtue of reciprocal attraction. For beauty dazzles and allures, and being itself only an illusion draws every creature after it, like a cunning piper, into that vain revolving dance which sages call the world; and which without its object would vanish like a dream when the dreamer is awake. And we all move in an everlasting round, like the drops of water in a waterfall, leaving an impression of permanence upon the eye of the observer; yet is this permanence only an illusion, and due to the perpetual flow of its fleeting and fantastic atoms. And in our momentary life, one thing only is essential, to taste if we can a single drop of the nectar of

[1] This, though she knew it not, was a home-thrust: for of Indra, as of Zeus, there is a scandalous chronicle.

true love, which is possible, for every atom, only if it can catch a glimpse of that peculiar beauty which is the proper object of its soul. And therefore, O Brahman, I am not ashamed of adoring the beauty of my husband, but I glory and rejoice in it, like one who has found the fruit of her birth. And like a moth, I flew into his candle, and became a willing victim. And I am ready to endure all the consequences of my choice. And when I waver in my allegiance to my lord, I will acknowledge the justice of thy reproof.

IX

THE TWO KINGS

Then said Indra: O low-voiced lady, when did a woman's tongue ever lack excuses for her behaviour with her lover? and thy ingenuity is not inferior to that of any of thy sex. And yet, say what thou wilt, thou knowest that thy father will not share thy own opinion in this matter: and thou and thy husband are likely to come to a speedy and miserable end, as soon as he discovers where you are.

Then said Wanawallarí: Brahman, thou art partly in the right, for it is possible that sudden anger may cause my father to act rashly. And yet even here, time may show that thou art

mistaken, for policy is the first consideration with my father, and he may see reason to forgive us. But let him do as he pleases, he cannot harm me. For whether he lets my husband live, or kills him, he cannot now divide us, nor deprive me of my right to follow him alive or dead, for a wife belongs not to her father but to her husband. So if we live, we live, and if we die, we die together. And death is no evil, but only an inevitable change; and often for the better, if the life to which it puts an end be one of works deserving a reward. For once there were two kings of the desert, called Haya and Gaja[1]: and they were deadly enemies. And Gaja set upon Haya, and killed his son and captured his wives and his capital and drove him away. So being reduced to extremity, Haya entered the service of Gaja, who did not know him by sight, as a personal retainer. And while he waited for an opportunity to revenge himself, Gaja was attacked and his army destroyed by a third king, and he fled into the desert, badly wounded, with only Haya for his companion, hoping to cross over the desert and get back to his own capital and be safe. So they two went together over the desert. And having but one skin of water, they could give

[1] "Horse" and "elephant." (Pronounce Gaj- to rhyme with *trudge*.)

none to their horses, which died: and they went on on foot.

Then Gaja said to Haya: There is hardly water in this skin to carry one man across the desert; much less two: and now our fate is sure. And they went on, and day by day the water shrank. And Haya carried the skin. And one night, as Gaja slept upon the sand, Haya remained awake. And he looked at the skin of water, and said: One man could cross the desert on this water, but not two. And now my enemy lies there before me. So he sat in silence, with his naked sword in his hand, alone in the desert with the twinkling stars, watching Gaja as he slept, all night long. And in the morning they went on. And as the sun grew hotter, Gaja grew fainter, for he was weakened by his wound. And he said to Haya: Let us drink, even if we die. So they drank. But Haya put shut lips to the water, and took none into his mouth. And so they went on day by day, and Gaja drank the water. But Haya only put it to his mouth, and looked at it with glittering eyes, and lips closed like the door of death.

And at last there came a day, when Gaja said: My wound has robbed me of my strength, and now I can go no further. Moreover, the water is done. Then Haya said: Be strong: it is but one day more. But Gaja said: Go thou on and save

thyself, and leave me here to die. And he fell upon the sand, and lay in a half-swoon.

And then Haya stooped, and took him in his arms, and staggered on. And as he went, he grew giddy, and his senses wandered, and the desert danced before his eyes. And he heard in his ears the plash of water, and the drums of the desert rang in his head, and behind him the spirits of the region of death called to one another across the sand, and laughed and mocked him as he went like one going in a dream. So he struggled on in the loneliness, while his life ebbed away, withering like a flower in the burning fire of that angry sun. And suddenly he heard in his dream the voice of Gaja, crying above his head: Lo! yonder is the city away before us, and now we are saved. Then Haya set him down. And he said: O King, I am Haya, and now I have brought thee over the dusty death. And he fell with his face upon the sand, and went to the other world. But Yama saw that action and remembered it: and Haya rose in the next birth out of mortality and became a spirit of the air.

X

A PARIAH DOG

Then said Indra: O lady, whose bow-arched eyebrow is touched with the exquisite beauty of

faint surprise, certainly that brave Rajpoot deserved his reward: but what is there in common between his action and that of thyself and thy husband?

Then said Wanawallarí: Brahman, that which is common to us is our reward: For I regard my meeting with my husband as a special favour of the deity greater even than the rise of Haya in the scale of being, and due beyond a doubt, like that, to some meritorious action in a previous birth. But as to our actions in this life, there is still time: and I will endeavour to efface whatever there may be of egotism and independence in this action of mine by the whole tenor of my future obedience. And do not therefore be too ready to estimate the future of our lives by the past: for while life itself endures, there is the possibility of change, and many times it has happened that the very close of life has brought with it something contradictory of its whole previous course. As once there was a dog without an owner. And it had nowhere to go, and nothing to eat: but it scraped for itself a miserable subsistence from the refuse of chance, eating and drinking out of gutters: and it was very thin, and covered with sores and wounds: for every one that saw it cursed it and abused it and drove it about, beating it with sticks and pelting it with stones; so that

living in terror of perpetual death, it carried its tail between its legs, and in its sad eyes hunger fought for the mastery with fear and shame. So it continued to live, until at last its end was near. And one day when it was so weak that it could hardly walk, there came by it along the road a bullock cart, containing a number of women who were coming from a wedding feast. And seeing the dog, they all began to jeer at it. But one of those women got down from the cart, and going up to the dog with compassion in her heart offered it a piece of cake. And the dog looked at her with wistful eyes, not understanding; for in its whole life no one had ever done it a kindness of any sort. And after a while, it wagged, very gently, the very end of its thin tail. And thus, O Brahman, none can tell with certainty the end of a life from its beginning: and it may be that my husband, or even I myself, may find opportunity to redeem ourselves from thy censure hereafter, by conduct deserving of thy approval.

XI

A RED LOTUS

Then said Indra: O ripe red fruit-lipped lady, for all that thou canst say, thou canst not persuade me that thou hast not done very ill in forsaking

thy father's house for the arms of this stranger. Wilt thou find reasons to prove that it is the duty of all kings' daughters to run away with robbers that break into their palaces by night?

Then said Wanawallarí: O Brahman, my case is an exception and not a rule, for all rules have exceptions. Moreover, though maybe thou wilt disbelieve it, know, that even I would not have acted as I did, but for just this husband and no other. For though I may appear to have acted in this matter with indiscretion and frivolity, yet it has been not in accordance with my nature, but against it; and therefore it furnishes no rules, either for any other person, or even for myself. For once in a way a coward may be brave, and a miser generous, and a wise man foolish, or even a sane man mad: and so may a woman give herself away without reserve to that one man who wakens the sleeping adoration in her heart, and lights in her soul the everlasting fire, without forfeiting her claim to be enrolled among the pure women of the world. And this I know to be my case, for my conscience is at ease, and does not blame me. And she who has her own soul on her side requires no other witness to her purity. As once there was a king with many wives, who were all unfaithful and untrue to him, but one. So having to go upon a warlike expedition, he gave

each of them a lotus, and said: Keep this red lotus, and show it to me when I come again; and its colour shall be a proof of thy fidelity. For I received it from the deity, and it will never wither, so long as thou art true to me alone. And then he went away. And as soon as he was gone, all those wives with one exception amused themselves with other men. And very soon they all looked to see their lotuses, and found them withered away and dead. And they all became afraid, being conscious of their guilt, except the one. Then presently news arrived that the king was coming back. And when he arrived, all his wives appeared to meet him, rejoicing and adorned, with protestations of affection. And the king said: Show me all your lotuses. And they showed them, each her own: and lo! they were all fresh and red as when he gave them. Only that one good wife gave him a withered lotus. And she said: O my lord, I know not how it is, that all these lotuses are fresh. For here is my lotus dead and withered, contrary to thy word: and yet my heart has never thought of any man but thee. Then all those other wives exclaimed against her, for they hated her: and they said: O king, she is corrupt, and we all know it: and now here is the proof. But the king looked at them, and he laughed. And he said:

O ye fools, how could a lotus remain fresh for so many months? Now are you all condemned by your own endeavours to conceal your guilt. But she alone was acquitted by her heart, and did not fear the withering of her lotus: and she alone is pure, and worthy to be my queen. For the lotus that did not wither was the lotus of her heart.

XII

THE WIND AND THE LEAVES

Then said Indra: O lady with a smile like the opening of a *bakula* [1] blossom, even if thou wert thyself deserving of excuse for falling victim to the innocence and tenderness of thy own maiden and unsophisticated heart, yet canst thou not exculpate thy husband, for coming like a thief at night and stealing thee away. Well didst thou say thyself, that like a moth thou hast flown into the fire, and burned away thy gauzy wings.

Then said Wanawallarí: Brahman, how can a weak woman hope to avoid a fate that overtakes even the greatest gods? Was not the god of love himself shrivelled like a butterfly in the fire of the Great God's eye? And how then could I escape

[1] *Mimusops Elengi:* a very fragrant flower celebrated in Hindoo stories; *Bakuli* being a favourite name for a princess or heroine.

from the fire in the eyes of him who is to me in place of God? Come now, shall I prove to thee that my husband has done no harm but rather good? Dost thou not know that women are like leaves, and love is like the wind, that blows hither and thither among the trees at its own sweet wayward will. And to every tree it comes and shakes the leaves. And some fall on the instant, while others remain fixed for a little time upon the bough: but sooner or later all are doomed to fall, save only those which unkind fate keeps unnaturally fastened to wither and decay upon the tree. For whether they fall or do not fall, they cannot escape the common inevitable end. So what is gained by the leaf that remains upon the tree? Were it not best to yield and fall, when wooed by a breeze laden with the fragrance of sandal from the mount of Malaya, than wait to be torn, willy-nilly, from the bough by an overbearing ungentlemanly blast? Now show me if thou canst a man more worthy to be my own or any other woman's husband than is he who stole me from my tree: for I have seen innumerable men as I looked from my window, and never any one to be compared with him. For he is strong and I am weak: and he is brave and I am timid: and his father was a king, and so is mine: and he is beautiful, and I can read in all men's eyes as

well as thine that I am too. For beauty shakes the heart of whosoever sees it, whether man or woman, and uproots it, and if it is very powerful snaps like cotton threads all the fibres that fixed it to its ancient soil, and carries it away, as his did mine. And so the heart of a woman is blown about and carried along by her husband, wherever he may choose to take her. And they who would have it otherwise are not pundits in the mystery of life. For my heart lay buried in utter darkness, like the earth at night: and there came in my husband at the window, like the sun at dawn: and in a moment I was full of the red delight of love. And now my soul is his by right, for all that now it is, is due to him: and its colour and its gladness are only the reflection and the consequence of him. Take him away, and all would disappear. And wilt thou blame the sun, for turning black night to rosy dawn?

XIII

A KING AND QUEEN

Then said Indra: O lady, whose body diffuses all around it the camphor perfume of high *caste*, thy pleading for thy culprit husband and thyself resembles the reflection of a peacock's tail in silent water: for it is various and beautiful, and

yet it is nothing but illusion; for thou art bewildered and intoxicated with the glamour of first love, which lends eloquence to thy tongue and makes thee take a wandering Rajpoot for a god.

Then said Wanawallarí: O Brahman, all is illusion in this world, and yet some illusions last longer than others: there is no other distinction or difference between them. And what does it matter even if, as thou sayest, my faith in my husband were illusion, provided only that it lasts, at least as long as life? What can be more illusive than a dream, yet who can discern the illusion of a dream, till by its coming to an end he wakes? Is not illusion as good as reality, until it is discovered to be illusion? Thy words are therefore naught, until my illusion is destroyed. Yet this may never be, for time may be wanting to detect it. It is a gain, even if it endure only for to-day, for who knows for certain that he will see the rising of another sun? As once there was a king, who was playing in the water with his queen at midday in the season of hot weather. And standing in that cool and crystal water, first he made her into statues, while he watched the pictures of her attitudes reflected in its mirror: and afterwards he splashed her with the water, till the queen began to look like a young moon peeping through the clouds: for her wet clothes clung to

her body, showing the outline of her limbs, and her dark blue hair was loosened from its braid and fell round her in a mass, and rained into the water. And when they were tired, they rested together in the shade of the ruin of an arbour that stood by the pool; and the king suddenly fell asleep with his head on her lap. And he dreamed that he went hunting in the morning, and as he went, he saw a Brahman lying asleep under a tree. And when at evening he came back, there was the Brahman still asleep. So he sent his attendants to awake him. Then after a while they returned, and said: Mahárájá, this Brahman will not wake, do what we may: and yet he is not dead, for he is warm, and breathes. Then the king had him brought into the palace, and laid upon a bed. And there that sleeper lay for seven years, while the king lived his life. And at last, one day, that Brahman suddenly awoke. And he looked round in amazement, and exclaimed: What is this? for only just now I lay down to sleep beneath a tree. And the king said: Brahman, thou hast lain there asleep for seven years, and all the while I have done my daily duties, and made wars and peaces, and begotten sons and daughters, who have grown whilst thou didst sleep upon the bed. And just as the Brahman was about to answer, the king suddenly awoke

himself. And he heard the voice of his queen, saying: *Aryaputra*, art thou asleep? Then the king said: How long have I slept? And she said: Thou hast only just laid thy head upon my lap. Then the king looked at her with astonishment. And suddenly he exclaimed: Ha! all is illusion, and all is momentary: what is time and what is a dream? I have slept for seven years: and there are thy wet clothes still clinging to the twins, that, like arrogant rebels, stand out from thy breast. And beyond a doubt, thou and I are but dreaming, and presently we shall awake. Kiss me quickly, without losing a moment, while yet there is time. And she thought he was mad. But she bent obediently towards him, with the *bimbá* [1] of her lower lip pursed for a kiss. And at that very moment, the roof of that ruined arbour fell in and crushed them, and they died on the spot: awaking from their dream before they had time to kiss each other, as the king had feared. And who can tell, O Brahman, whether it may not be our lot, also to wake from the dream of our life, before there is time to wake from the illusion of our love?

[1] A fruit employed by Hindoo poets as we speak of "cherry" lips.

XIV

LOVE THE FISHERMAN

Then said Indra: O lady of limbs that are shaped like serpents sweeping and winding in curving coils, thy words are prophetic, and thy own dream is likely to prove but a short one, with a bitter awakening even in this life. What if this husband of thine should have left thee already, never to return?

Then Wanawallarí said with a smile: O Brahman, hast thou never seen a man of the *caste* of fishermen, fishing for little fishes in the water of the Ganges? Once they have swallowed the bait, they cannot escape, being held fast by the cord. And then being caught, they are roasted by their captor at the flame of a fire, and devoured. Dost thou not know that the god of love has a fish for the sign on his banner? And why, save that he is himself a fisherman, who fishes for the hearts of men, using women for his bait? And so only last night he fished for my husband, and caught him, using me for his lure, and now the fish can no longer escape. For he has swallowed the bait, and the cord of no fisherman was ever so strong as that by which my husband is held by that Master Fisher, Love. For such is the cunning of that god, that so far from shunning the fire at

which he cooks them, his fishy victims bask and rejoice in it: and the longer my husband has been away from me, the more and more certain his return, and the more intolerable to himself his absence. For now he resembles one frozen with the ice and snow of the Himálaya mountain, and very soon he will utterly perish, unless he comes back to warm his cold heart at the flame which Love keeps ever burning in my own. For know, that the heart of a loyal wife is the altar of Love, on which the sacred household fire ever burns. And it shines out in the darkness, to guide the travelling husband home: and in his absence, its pure beam on the black night resembles the streak made by gold on the dark touchstone of fidelity. And no fire goes out while there is still fuel to feed it: and mine is not yet utterly exhausted. Nor was I so foolish as to let my husband leave me, without a security for his return. For know, O Brahman, that of all the Creator's creatures, there are only two that do not require to hunt for their legitimate prey, but wait quietly while it rushes to destruction in their toils of its own accord. And of these, one is a spider,[1] and the other is a woman.

[1] This word might also mean a fisherman, a "netmaker."

XV

A WOMAN'S LORD

Then said Indra: O thou delicious lady, Love has cast his spell upon thee, or as thou sayest, caught thee on his hook; and now thou art like one who looks from afar upon the desert, and admires its delusive beauty, not knowing, by reason of inexperience, what its nature really is. And doubtless thou art right, and thy husband will hold thee fast, while the blossom of thy beauty is fresh and fragrant with morning dew; but when thou art worn and dusty in the heat of the day, beware! lest he should throw thee away. Thou dost not know what lies before the vagabond's wife.

Then said Wanawallarí: Brahman, she that chooses her own husband resembles a bold gambler, that stakes his all upon a single cast of the die. And if she has chosen lightly, guided only by frivolity and the desire of selfish pleasure, evil and woe will be her doom. But if she has made her choice not obeying her own inebriation but rather spell-bound and appropriated by the master spirit of her true husband and the fatal moment [1] that brought her like a planet within

[1] The Sanskrit word *lagna*, meaning an astrological moment of planetary conjunction, has become, in modern Maráthí, the common term for a *marriage*. It is, I believe, essential for a

his grasp, then poor is her nature and feeble her devotion if she be not prepared to follow him blindfold, and take all that fate in his form may involve in her lot. For she that leaves all behind her and comes at the call of her husband does so not out of pleasure, though the pleasure is supreme, but as it were against her own will, and simply because she cannot help it, because he is he. And thereafter nothing can befall her, for the fruit of her birth is obtained. For it is better for a woman to find her master, even if he should afterwards ill-use or desert her, than never to discover him at all. For every woman needs a lord, but many never find him. But when she has found him, let him treat her how he will, she is his. But if she finds the wrong man, though he may treat her as a queen and adore her as a goddess, yet she never will love him and her heart will not be happy, because she is not his, and he cannot command her. For an elephant is held by a chain, and a woman by her heart; and the essence of her love is the sense of obedience; for no woman ever loves any man, unless she knows that he is her master to be obeyed without a murmur whether she will or no. Yet in this is no slavery, for she loves her chain, and likes to be

Hindoo marriage that the horoscopes of the bride and groom should correspond.

dominated by the man she adores. And for every woman, happiness is misery, with the man who is not her true master: but misery is happiness with the husband who is. And no one but a woman can understand the indescribable pleasure of willing obedience to her lord; for it arises from the peculiarity of her nature which man does not share; for his nature is not to obey but command. And now, my husband is my lord, and I am his slave. And if he continue to love me, it is well: and if not, still it is well, for he cannot prevent me from worshipping him. For though the Creator may if he pleases drive away the swan from the lotus-haunted pool that he loves, he cannot with all his omnipotence deprive him of his desire of the pool. Nor can any destiny overpower the loyalty of a wife: for she whose devotion to her husband is diminished by circumstance or change was never his wife, but a stranger, joined to him by accident and error and called by a name that was never hers.

XVI

A GOD ABASHED

Then said Indra: O lady of swelling bosom and lofty soul, though thy husband has found in thee a jewel through no merit of his own, still

thou canst not deny that he is a scorner of the gods, and therefore doomed to bring himself and thee also into disaster arising from their anger.

Then Wanawallarí rose up and stood before him. And she crossed her hands over her bosom, and lowered her long dark lashes over her eyes. And she said: Brahman, now I am a wife, and it may be shall soon be a mother, and many things I know now that yesterday were unknown to me. And now, let me ask thee a question. If I should have a son, and if, when he grew to be a man, in a moment of forgetfulness and anger due to evil fortune he should curse me as the author of his misery: tell me, what would be my duty? Should I abandon and forsake him; or should I not rather forgive and condone his offence, considering it rather as the outcome of a moment of passion than the deliberate act of a hardened ill-doer?

And she raised her lashes, and looked at him with clear, irrefutable eyes that penetrated his soul, and waited for him to reply. And Indra was abashed before her, and could not meet her glance. And he struck his hands together, and exclaimed: O woman and wife, subtle-witted and silver-tongued, whose incomparable beauty is rendered irresistible by the soft love-light in thy young bride's eyes, I am conquered by thee, and thy husband is blest in thee: and well is it said,

that a virtuous woman is higher than the gods. Know, that I came to punish thy husband, but thou hast redeemed him, and stood between him and the wrath of heaven. Take thy husband and lead him into the good path, which is thy own, and save him, if thou canst, from thy father's vengeance, as now from mine.

And instantly he vanished from before her eyes, and flew up into the sky. And WATER-LILY saw him go: and she looked after him with triumph in her almond eyes, and laughter on her vermilion lips. But Wanawallarí started, when she saw that illusive Brahman disappear. And she drew her breath, and stood, like a startled fawn, with wondering eyes and moving breast, while the colour came and went upon her cheek. And then she said to herself: It was as I thought, and that old Brahman was some deity, descending in a mortal form to try me. For his eyelids never moved,[1] and his body cast no shadow, and he knew all that had occurred to us as no mortal could have known it. But now, let me remember his words, and stand, if I can, between my husband and my father's anger. And as she spoke, she looked, and saw her husband coming quickly towards her along the street.

[1] A peculiarity of gods, denoted by fixed epithets: as *animisha, stabdha-lochana*, one "*whose eyes are fixed*," "*who does not wink.*"

XVII

NECTAR

And then with a cry of joy, she ran towards him, while the colour leaped into her face. And he came towards her very quickly, and said: See, here is food, and wine, and a cup out of which we will drink together, and a lute for thee to play. But O! how beautiful thou art; and I am faint and hungry, but only for the nectar of thy arms and thy lips. And she put her arms round him, and they stood together for an instant, while their souls met rapturously after separation, hovering in agitation at the door[1] of their thirsty lips. And then, after a while, she said: Come, thou art here, and thou art hungry, and so am I. Let us eat first, and then it may be, thou shalt kiss me again. But Ranga put his burden down, and took her in his arms. And he kissed her, till her lips turned pale, as if for fear lest her breath should abandon her. And then they sat together by the well, and ate and drank, kissing each other between every mouthful, and smiling with tears in their eyes, utterly forgetting their own names.

Then when they had finished eating, they got up and clasped in each other's arms, like a human symbol of myself[2] and thee, they wandered about,

[1] *Dantachada:* precisely the Homeric ἕρκος ὀδόντων.
[2] Maheshwara *loquitur.*

watching the parrots screaming in the fig trees, and the monkeys climbing over the roofs of the deserted houses, and sighing by reason of excess of happiness, and laughing without a cause, while the day passed away like a flash of lightning, and the sun went to his rest in the mountain of his setting, and the moon rose. And then Wanawallarí said: Come let us go back, and find the wine, and we will have a drinking bout: thou shalt drink for both of us, and I will sing and play to thee on the lute, and dance with my shadow to attend me, to show thee my accomplishments and give thee pleasure in the light of the moon.[1] So they did. And Ranga sat under the tree, with the cup of red wine in his hand, while she danced [2] and played and sang to him, looking in the moonlight like a feminine incarnation of the camphor-essence and beauty of the moon come down to earth to entrance his soul and wean it from all care for earthly things. And he watched her with intoxicated eyes, and said to himself: Surely she is a portion of the celestial delight of heaven that has somehow assumed the form of a woman; or a piece of sky-crystal tumbled by accident to earth,

[1] There is a pun here: she compares herself to a digit of the moon.

[2] Dancing is associated by the modern Hindoos with lax morality: but this cannot always have been the case for in most Hindoo romances the heroine is accomplished in that art.

laughing in its purity at the grossness of the materials by which she is surrounded!

So they two delighted each other in that ruined city, bathed in the moonlight, and the ecstasy of the mutual infatuation of first love. But in the meanwhile, the jeweller, to whom Ranga had taken Wanawallarí's bracelet, was filled with amazement when he saw it. And he said to himself: Where did this Rajpoot get such a jewel, which could not be matched in the city? So after buying it for a very low price, he followed Ranga without his knowledge, and saw him making purchases in the bazaar: and finally he dogged his footsteps at a distance, when he returned to the empty city. And when those lovers met, that curious jeweller looked round the corner of the street, and saw them. But they never noticed him, for they were lost in oblivion of everything in the world except themselves. Then still more astonished than before, the jeweller said to himself: The beauty of this woman exceeds that of all others as much as does that bracelet, which is doubtless hers, all other jewels of its kind: and now there must be a story in this matter. So after waiting a while, and watching them, he returned slowly and reluctantly to his own house. And when he got there he found the whole city in uproar. And when he enquired the reason,

the people said: Somebody or other has come by night and carried away the King's daughter. And there is a great reward for the man who can find out who took her, and where she is.

And instantly the jeweller took his bracelet, and ran at full speed to the King's palace. And being admitted, he told his story and showed the bracelet. And the King recognised it as his daughter's; and sent, without a moment's delay, guards, who led by the jeweller, went as quickly as possible to the empty city. And while those lovers, forgetful of everything, were intoxicating each other's eyes in the moonlight, suddenly they heard a shout, and the King's guards rushed in and seized them, and carried them away prisoners to the King.

But WATER-LILY saw them go. And she tossed her pretty head, and yawned. And she said: Now I have kept my promise to the gods, and caused the King to discover the hiding-place of these foolish lovers. And I have done enough for this fellow, and I am beginning to be tired of him. Strange! how soon these mortals pall on me! they have nothing permanently interesting about them, and any fancy that I have for them passes off like a shadow almost as soon as it arrives. But still, he is the best-looking man that I ever saw. And so, I will do him one more good turn, and then leave him to shift for himself.

XVIII

THE FAVOUR OF FORTUNE

So Wanawallarí and her lover were carried quickly back to the palace, and brought in by the guards before the King. And when the King saw them, he clapped his hands: and he said: Ha! so the flown bird and her decoy are caged. And now, what shall be done to the daughter who brings disgrace upon her family by running away with strolling Rajpoots? Or what does the thief deserve who breaks into the palaces of kings by night and carries off their daughters and their choicest gems?

Then said Wanawallarí: O father, let not anger blind thee to justice. For though I have acted independently, I have done nothing, as thou shalt find, to disgrace either myself or thee. For know, that this husband of mine is, like myself, the child of a king, and even himself a king. And as for me, did not Draupadí and Damayantí choose their own husbands? And was not Shakuntalá wedded to Dushyanta by the Gándharwa ceremony, and Bharata was their son? But the King said: Enough, O daughter! Thy husband shall die with the rising of the sun, however it may be with thee. Then said Wanawallarí: Then wilt thou be the murderer of thy own flesh and blood:

for he is my husband, and I will die with him. And the King laughed. And he said: O my daughter, that art no longer my daughter, dost thou really think to persuade me that I am obliged to this Rajpoot for carrying thee away; or to thee for causing scandal by running away with him, like an independent woman of no family, of thy own accord?

Then said Wanawallarí: O father, listen for a moment: and afterwards put us both, if thou wilt, to death, and not him alone. This is no common matter, and sure I am, that the deity has a hand in it. Tell me only this, for thou knowest me well: was I one to act lightly? And the King said with bitterness: It is that very thing which makes thy behaviour incomprehensible. For I thought thee another Sitá: and lo! thou hast leaped from thy window into the arms of a wandering Rajpoot! Who can fathom the nature of women or the bottomless abyss of their frivolity? They talk to one man, and look at another, and think of a third.[1] They are but deceit incarnate in a form of illusion. For four things are insatiable of four: ocean, of rivers, and death, of mortals, and fire, of fuel, and woman, of man.

[1] This is the ungallant opinion of Bhartrihari, based it may be on some fierce fiery pang of a jealous heart, long since gone to dust and ashes.

Then said Wanawallarí: But one question I have to ask thee, and it is the last: Of whom didst thou destine me to be the bride: Was it not the King of Awantí? And the King said: Yes. Then Wanawallarí took her husband by the hand. And she said: Here he is. And now I am his wife: and be sure, that the deity himself has brought this about. For know, that last night, this man climbed into my room. And I paused for a moment ere I gave him to the guards, for I pitied him for his beauty and his youth. And I said to him: Who art thou? And he said: I am the King of Awantí. And I started, and I listened to his story; and as I listened, he stole away my heart through my eyes and my ears. And I saw before me, not that hideous Rákshasa for whom I was destined as a victim of thy political necessity, but the God of Love in human form. And know, that rather than become the bride of that other, who has driven away my husband, and keeps by force a kingdom not his own, I would have thrown myself down from my window, and I looked upon myself as already dead. For I knew that policy was thy first consideration, and that I must be a sacrifice. And I looked upon him who is my husband, as I listened to his tale, as one sent by the deity himself, and as new life in the form of a man. For how could chance

have brought into my window the very king to whom I was betrothed, if not by the express agency of the deity himself? Moreover, thy own interest was concerned: and if thou wilt let thy reason speak, I have done thee no injury, but a service. For why wouldst thou have had me the bride of that usurper, but to ally to thee the kingdom which he holds? And how art thou injured, if thou hast gained for the husband of thy daughter not the false king but the true? Do my husband right, and instead of putting him to death, help him to regain his throne: and thou shalt gain for a bad ally a good one: as I have gained for myself a good husband for a bad one: and a kingdom for all three of us.

Then the King exclaimed in amazement: This is but an idle tale, concocted between thy lover and thyself to deceive me. And then Ranga spoke. And he said: O King, till now I have not spoken, for I would not beg my life, and I considered it as a thing gone past recall. But know, that as to what concerns myself, thy daughter has told thee nothing but the truth: and so far from arranging it together, she never told me anything about it, and all that concerns my uncle, and thyself, and her, is news to me, and I hear it for the first time. So now put me, if thou wilt, to death, or if thou wilt, keep me under

guard, and make enquiry. And if it is not true, put me to a hundred deaths instead of one. Or lend me, if thou wilt, but a little force, and I will put myself upon my throne. For my subjects love me, and submit to my uncle only from necessity; and be sure, that he covets thy alliance only because he knows that he is weak, and cannot stand without support. So do according to thy will. Only visit not thy anger on thy daughter, for I only am to blame. And yet, I think that even I am not without excuse. Look at her as she stands, and blame me if thou canst; for even a god would fall if tempted by a beauty such as hers. Yet know, that it was accident and not intention that brought about our union. For I climbed up into thy tower, not knowing what was there. And now, I am in thy hands.

And as he spoke, WATER-LILY put beauty in his limbs and courage in his voice. And the King watched him, against his will, with admiration. And he said to himself: He says well, for my daughter might turn a sage from his devotion. And he himself is one whom a maiden might be forgiven for admiring, for I have never seen a finer man. Certainly, if only the tale were true, he would make a son-in-law well fitted to my daughter. So when Ranga had made an end, the King stood looking at him under his brows,

balanced in the swing of irresolution, between his anger, and his affection for his daughter, and the influence of the tale. And as he stood in silence, Wanawallarí came and knelt at his feet. And she said: O father, do not kill him, but protect him, and it will be thy gain. But as for me, deal with me as thou wilt. For I have acted rashly, and I deserve only punishment and disgrace. I am only a weak woman, and his beauty carried me away. Yet know, that thy posterity is within me, and there stands the father of thy grandson. And dost thou think that such a man as that would beget a son to bring disgrace on thee and me? And she looked at her father, with tears falling from her eyes like rain. And they fell upon his anger, and melted it, and overcame him. And he took her in his arms, and kissed her, stroking her hair with his hand. And he said: Dear daughter, I cannot be thy enemy, even if I would, and the tears in thy eyes have brought tears into my own. And if thou hast acted very rashly, I will not follow thy example. Let thy husband stay with me, and I will investigate the truth: and if it be as thou sayest, we will see what can be done for him.

Then Wanawallarí caught him round the neck with a cry, and wept upon his breast. And by the help of that King, Ranga regained his throne,

and got Wanawallarí for his queen. For a husband's fortune is the virtue of his wife.

XIX

THE TRIUMPH OF BEAUTY

And then, Water-lily left him, and quitted the earth, and flew up to heaven. And there she found all the gods assembled in Indra's hall. And instantly she began to mock them. And she exclaimed: Now you may see how vain it is for any or even all of you together to contend with me. For this Rajpoot has attained prosperity in spite of your dislike, by my favour; and as for Indra, he was utterly worsted by beauty, when he met it in the form of a mortal woman. And after having flouted them, she went away, laughing in triumph as she went, and casting back upon them over her shoulder glances out of the corner of her almond eyes that pierced the heart of the gods like poisoned needles.

And then they looked at each other, and said: We have all been made fools by this wicked Water-lily; and now this is utterly intolerable. And Indra said: Though that mortal scoffer, whom I forgave for the sake of his wife, was to blame, yet she will bring him back to his duty. But the real culprit in this matter is this

mischievous goddess. For she took us all in by a show of submission, and has shown favour to a mortal who flattered her vanity, out of a capricious desire to tease and annoy us all. Therefore now we must punish and put a stop to her proceedings: for if she be allowed to go on, everything human and divine will be thrown into confusion. And now she is young, and capable of improvement: but unless she be kept in order, she will get worse and worse. Therefore we must look to it without loss of time.

Thereupon they all came in a body to me.[1] But I said to them: This is not my affair. Go to Náráyana, if you have any complaint to make against WATER-LILY. For to punish the wife is the duty of none but the husband. And I sent them away. Thereupon the gods hunted through the universe for Náráyana, but for a long time in vain. And then at last they found him alone in the very middle of the sea, lying on the leaf of a lotus as it floated about on the waves, sucking his left toe, and buried in meditation. And as they came and ranged themselves in silence before him, the adorable Harí politely took his toe from his mouth, and gazed at them curiously with great dreamy eyes, as much as to say: What do you want of me?

[1] *Sc.* Maheshwara.

Then the gods, with Indra for spokesman, having first bowed respectfully before him, said: O Achyuta, we have come to complain to thee of the conduct of thy wife: who has made us all ridiculous by taking the part of a mortal that showered abuse on us, simply because he loaded her alone with flattery and praise. And she laughs in our faces into the bargain, though she is the youngest of us all. And now she has hidden herself somewhere or other and cannot be found. Therefore our prayer to thee is, that she may be taught by thee the due bounds of propriety and decorum, and respect for her elders. For our dignity is diminished by the wilful independence of her behaviour.

And then, that husband of WATER-LILY whispered very gently the name of his wife. And low though it was, the sound of that whisper vibrated through the three worlds into the uttermost parts of space: and the universe echoed to its tone like a lute whose strings tremble at the touch of the wind. And as that ubiquitous murmur sank and died away into a hush, the sea began to bubble and foam, and suddenly the goddess of beauty rose up out of the lather of its waves for the second time.[1] And she stood with her little feet

[1] The first time was when she was born, at the churning of ocean.

resting on the back of a tortoise, and the sea water dropping from her limbs that seemed to sparkle with the beauty of its salt. And her neck resembled a shell, and on the pearl of its surface was reflected the dark shadow of the green emeralds that hung round it; and she held in one hand a dark blue lotus of exactly the same colour as her long-cornered, lash-netted, shadowy eyes. And the graceful creepers of her soft round arms, and the extremities of her smooth and tapering legs, whose knees bent a little inwards, were loaded with rings of red coral that blushed with envy at the colour of her lips, which smiled as if conscious of their own superiority: while her bosom, whose two breasts were turned slightly away from each other like sisters that have quarrelled, rose very gently up and down as if keeping time to the music of the sea. And she held up with her left hand a coil of the blue hair which fell in masses from her head, and encircled her like a cloud blown by the breeze: and its end trailed away over the ocean waves. So she stood in silence, bending a little forward, till a three-fold wrinkle showed in the soft fold of her slender waist, while the foam plashed and lapped over the back of the tortoise that supported her, hungry to kiss the arched instep of her tiny pearly-toed feet. And her eyes looked

far away, fixed on the horizon of that sky-bounded ocean plain.

And the gods looked at her in silence, and then at each other. And each knew what the other thought, though no one spoke. And each one said to himself: How is it possible to accuse such a beautiful creature as this of anything whatever, much less punish her. So they all stood gazing at her, confounded and abashed, and intoxicated, and silent, while she waited before them, and Wishnu watched both her and them with dreaming eyes. And suddenly the gods turned, as if by mutual consent. And without speaking, they all flew away together over the sea, and disappeared on its edge like a flock of birds.

And then Wishnu looked at his wife with a glance of ineffable affection. And after a while he beckoned to her with a smile. Then WATER-LILY came at once, and sat down at the feet of her lord, and began to rub them gently with a hand softer than the lotus which she laid beside them. And Wishnu watched her, opening and closing his dreamy eyes, while the waves rocked their lotus couch quietly up and down. And the sun set, and the night fell, leaving them alone together in the darkness on the bosom of the sea.

Epilogue

EPILOGUE

And then Maheshwara ceased. And he put up his hand, and took the *Kathaka* out of his hair, and set him down. And he said: Thou hast heard: Go now, and tell thy story to the King.

But instead of going, the *Kathaka* fell with his face upon the snow. And he exclaimed: O Maheshwara, O Shambu, O Three-eyed Trident-bearer, O Lord of All and Giver of Boons, thou hast sanctified my ears with the nectar of thy tale. Yet O! grant me yet one other boon. So Maheshwara said: What is that? And the *Kathaka* said: O show me but a single glimpse of that wave-born beauty, as she rose out of the sea before the gods.

Then the Great God said privately to his wife: See now, how these dim-sighted stupid mortals ask for they know not what, and rush ignorantly upon their own destruction. And he said to the *Kathaka:* Dost thou really desire to see that immortal beauty? The *Kathaka* said: Yes. Then said the god to Umá: Go quickly and find Water-lily, and tell her only that I have need of her favour for a moment.

Then his wife flew away like a flash of lightning. And they waited there in silence, the Great God and the mortal, while the diadem of the deity shone out over the lonely peaks of snow. And after a while, the Daughter of the Mountain returned, bringing WATER-LILY with her. Then that beautiful one said: I am here: and now, what favour has the Great God to confer upon me?

And Maheshwara said: O darling of Náráyana, here is a poor devil of a mortal, to whom I have granted a boon. Do me this favour: show thyself for a single instant. And he said to the *Kathaka:* Look up now, and see.

And the *Kathaka* raised his head, and looked up into the dark expanse of sky, stretching over the pallid snowy moonlit peaks. And suddenly the goddess was revealed against it, like a picture painted on a wall. And for a single fraction of an atom of an instant of time, there flashed in his eyes the vision of that blinding loveliness, and over two hills of snow a pair of dark blue eyes shot into his own, and withered his heart like a blade of dry grass in a sheet of forest flame. And he uttered a cry, and caught at his heart with both hands, and fell upon the snow dead.

Then said Maheshwara: How could a mortal expect to endure such a beauty as thine? But

this dead body must not remain here. And he took it by the foot with his purifying hand, and flung it away. Then that empty corpse rushed with a whistle through the ice-cold air, and fell like a meteor into the Ganges at Haradwára. But the soul of that unlucky *Kathaka* instantly returned to earth and was born again. And he became a poet, who wandered in the world all his life long, hunting with a heart on fire for the eyes he could never find.

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